ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES.



A SCOTTISH TRADITION.

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ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES;

OR, THE

OUTLAWS OF BARRA.

A SCOTTISH TRADITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

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ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES.



CHAPTER I.

"*BREAK, ye rude waves of the Northern Sea! break on the tower of M'Leod.—Like the rock on which it is founded, it mocks your efforts.—Lonely and forsaken, its halls are desolate, and its chambers the retreat of birds, who mistake its galleries for the recesses of the mountain.—Soon, soon shall they afford refuge to the eagle, who under his wing shall rear the bloody arm on which shall hang the future fate of Scotland.*"

Rising from one of his prophetic

dreams, thus spoke the seer of Roskelyn Glen, his affrighted spirit projecting his eyeballs, his cheeks pale, his lips livid, and his grey hair stiffened and erect.

Again entranced he lay, when wildly starting, he continued—"*And ye lofty turrets of Roskelyn's wide domain, your pride shall bow, till the disgrace of your ancient house becomes its highest glory.*"

He ceased for some moments, then again exclaimed—"*Ah me! sad sight! on what a field of blood will shine the glorious sun!—See, the parties meet!—hark to the clashing of their spears!—they strike, they sink, they fall!—Again they rise; again renew the attack with more than mortal fury!—they bleed!—their spears are broken!—they draw their swords!—their armour is cleft in twain!—The bloody arm triumphs, and Scotland is once more free from the tyrant yoke of England!*"

Such was the vision that intruded itself

self on the aged seer, who, faint, and powerless, when nature recovered her usual tone, craved a draught of water from two youthful shepherds, who had witnessed the prophetic speeches which he had uttered; then, praying them to lead him to his humble home, he stretched himself on his couch, and endeavoured to collect his wandering spirit.

The seer composed to rest, the shepherds left him.—"Donald," said Robert, as they walked forward, "in good troth, but I tremble in every limb; what think you of what we have heard? I pray ye heed it well."

"I will," answered Donald. "When the spirit speaks thus in inspired men, we should indeed mark it; but a close mouth makes a wise head. The prediction seemed to allude, in part, to the house of our noble lord, and to mention *that* might involve us in ruin."

"Troth might it; my advice is for

us to consult the holy monk John of Inveresk; we can give him the account together, and he will advise for the best."

"Right, Robert; I like your counsel well; we will away thither. The seer spoke of the tower of M'Leod—know ye where that is situated?"

"Not in the Lowlands, as I should conjecture," answered Donald. "The seer himself is of the western isles—'tis probably there; but what think you of the eagle who shall rear the bloody arm?"

"Nay, I know not; our poor country is never free from warfare. Some deadly battle is surely foretold, and all we can say is the will of Heaven must be fulfilled. It may perhaps never take place in our time, for these inspired men see forward for many years."

Thus conversing, by the close of day they reached the chapel of Inveresk, where

where they relieved their minds to the monk: he heard them with attention, and took their depositions down in writing; then giving them his blessing, dismissed them, with a strict injunction to conceal what they had heard, as it could answer no purpose to disclose it, but might breed confusion, by inflaming weak minds; that the will of Heaven would be, in its own time, undoubtedly accomplished; and that all erring mortality could effect, was to receive its decrees with pious resignation.

CHAPTER II.



During the latter years of James I. of Scotland, in an ancient fortress, situated in the island of Barra*, resided St. Clair Monteith, an outlaw. Young, open, and generous, he was universally beloved, not only by the poor inhabitants of Barra, but throughout the islands which he sometimes indiscriminately visited, and from whence the power of James himself could scarcely, against his will, have forced him.

St. Clair Monteith, or St. Clair of the Isles, as he was more commonly called, was at the period of his outlawry not more than twenty-two. He had been bred and trained to arms by his uncle Monteith,

* One of the Hebrides.

Monteith, who at his death left him considerable possessions in the south of Scotland, but which, on his outlawry, had been seized by the strong hand of power, and the produce devoted to the use of his enemies. Confined by the royal mandate to the isle of Barra, he had taken up his residence in an old fortress, called the tower of M'Leod, where, could he have forgotten past events, he might have lived happily, for he had four companions, well born and valiant, who had voluntarily shared his misfortunes and disgrace. To these, at different times, others in similar circumstances, though without the sentence of the law, had joined; so that St. Clair, if occasion needed, wanted neither commanders nor men, for in his companions he had chiefs, and in every islander a willing soldier. The court of Scotland well knew his power, but as he was peaceable, no means were used to check

 it,

it, either from fear or prudence. The money he had brought to the island on his first outlawry he had spread with a liberal hand; and for cattle, or other necessaries which he had since purchased, he had given orders to the amount on an agent in the vicinity of Edinburgh.

The outlaws, companions of St. Clair, were, first, Sir James Ross, a valiant knight, and noble gentleman, the companion of St. Clair's youthful days, and the sworn friend of his riper years. Allan Hamilton, of a similar character, learned and reflective, a disposition which he had yet more cultivated since his residence at Barra. The chevalier de Bourg, a French knight, lively, generous, and volatile, and who, involved in St. Clair's disgrace, had voluntarily shared his captivity, rather than attempt an escape to his native country. The last was James M'Gregor, bold, undaunted, and revengeful where he was dis-

pleased,

pleased, but willing to sacrifice his life and fortune in the cause of honour or friendship. These gentlemen, as well as St. Clair, were bachelors; and though for some time the rocks of Barra had in general confined them, they looked forward to the time when they should burst their bonds, and again become active members of society.

The characters who had at different times joined them were of divers kinds, but in general men of talents, and well born, who had either left their country from difference of political opinion, family quarrels, debt, or other cause, and, as the name and character of St. Clair were well known, had enlisted under his banners: these last amounted to twelve; the whole inhabitants making seventeen.

CHAPTER III.



"FILL your goblet; nay, fill to the brim; my pledge is, 'May the generous soul prosper, and the oppressor sink into deserved infamy!' Nay, drink it to the dregs; what, though we are outlaws, we are men. From eighteen to twenty-one, the world plundered and laughed at me; now, though they still plunder me, they tremble at my name, for fear of what may come. At the final account which priests say we all must give, let the widow I have wronged, the orphan I have oppressed, or the virgin I have betrayed, stand forth and bruit it to my face."

"Your inclinations, St. Clair, did not naturally

naturally lead to these points," answered the chevalier de Bourg; "therefore you possess the less virtue in having avoided them; but woe to you, if broken heads, and an invincible spirit, are included in the acts of condemnation! Never since you were sixteen have I seen you so quietly inclined, as since James did us the favour of ordering us here."

"The reason is obvious," replied St. Clair; "from my earliest youth my heart was alive to gratitude; and do not our poor neighbours here, and the inhabitants of the adjacent isles, all love and regard us? I am therefore careful to support a conduct proper to justify their opinion; and, by my soul! if I knew one among us stoop to meanness or dishonour, my voice and arm should be the first to banish him from our society."

"Your wishes have hitherto been our

law, and strictly observed," answered one of the number.

"'Tis well! then let the proud court of Scotland bow to the barren rocks of Barra, and confess the superiority of nature's commoners. Not only our own honour demands our acting as we have hitherto done, but also common prudence; for in our old dwelling here, though it be crumbling with age, and perishing with neglect, we are as secure as in a strongly-defended castle, for there is not one of our neighbours but would fight, bleed, or die for us."

"True," answered M'Gregor; "yet I have often thought that it would be prudent to repair our fortress, and increase our number of inmates. James may not always be so pacific, and in case of danger we are but seventeen."

"Perish the thought!" replied St. Clair; "seventeen men are enough to procure all the necessaries we want. In

all

all our contests hitherto, seventeen men have been enough for victory; and in case we fall, seventeen men are enough to die."

"That's readily allowed," said Ross, "yet methinks M'Gregor advises well; your enemies are powerful, and, will never think themselves secure while you have life."

"Perhaps so," answered St. Clair, "but my unhappy fortune has already involved too many of my friends; but our die is cast, and must be abided. For those gentlemen that have voluntarily joined us, like ourselves, I surmise they have some strong quarrel with the world; but for the islanders, they have none; they labour in the manner of their fathers, and are content with the station allotted them. Shall we then break on their quiet? no surely; let them vegetate in happy obscurity; labour and peace for them—the bustle of

life

life and jollity for us! But see, the goblets stand; drink round—drown reflection."

The party drank.—" I espouse St. Clair's opinion," said Hamilton; " we are inmates enough for peace, and in case of danger, the standard of St. Clair would collect an army.

" For men," said De Bourg, " act as you please. I am as willing to fight, nay to die, in a good cause, as another; but for a Frenchman of my age and constitution to be stewed up like a monk in a cell is too much. A few women now would render all easy.

" Women!" repeated St. Clair; " by Heaven! chevalier, when you introduce them, ye lose me: bring me toads, serpents, tigers, devils, fiends, but spare me from women. Are ye tired of quiet, that ye name them? Bring women, and you bring dissensions never to be appeased; and all the concomitant horrors

rors of quarrels, blood, and murder.—No, we will have no mistresses but the bottle, no crime but drunkenness."

"St. Clair is right," answered Hamilton; "women would but breed contention, and more men confusion.. If we live like monks, at least we are merry ones, and our penances easy."

"Well observed, wisdom," said one of the party, who had lately come to the island; "from you I expected as much, but from St. Clair's complexion, far otherwise. Had ye never mothers, or did ye never love?"

"A mother I undoubtedly had," replied St. Clair, a burning blush mantling through his dark complexion, and overshadowing his manly features, "but she was a wolf, and so fierce and inhuman, that she not only refused to nourish my infancy, but would, if possible, have devoured me in my riper years. Like other fools too, I fell in love; that

is,

is, the glittering crest of a serpent caught my eye, and I pursued it till it fixed a sting in my heart. For a while I yielded to my folly, but at length, calling reason to my aid, I made a strong effort, and plucked at once the venom from my heart."

The horn at the gate of the fortress at that moment gave notice of strangers, and proved some herdsmen from Lochaber, from whom St. Clair had received oxen and sheep, not only for the use of the fortress, but also to help the poor islanders, who had been greatly distressed during the winter, which had been uncommonly severe. For the value of these he had given an order on an agent near Edinburgh, but who had declined accepting the drafts, saying, that he had received orders from the earl of Roskelyn to disregard any such as might be sent him from St. Clair, whose estate the king had awarded to his sole use.

St.

St. Clair rose hastily from table, his face flushing with anger, and his eyes sparkling with indignation, "The miscreant!" exclaimed he; "by my soul! I will once more proclaim him villain, even to the tyrant's face. 'Tis not the order of James that shall confine me to Barra; with the first fair wind I will away to Scotland, and retrieve mine own or die."

Ross, Hamilton, De Bourg, and M'Gregor, laid their hands upon their swords. "Let good or ill befall," exclaimed they in one voice, "we go with you; neither shall you fall alone nor unrevenged."

"Nay, then, we all go," added some of the party that had joined them; "St. Clair must leave none of his friends behind."

St. Clair looked affectionately round him. "Do not unman me," said he; "no man whose life is in danger shall leave the island. A day may yet come, when

when we shall regain our rights, though for a while injustice triumphs. The present quarrel is only mine, and I alone will meet it."

"By my honour, you shall not!" replied Ross; "if you resolve to brave destruction, I will share the danger."

The whole party interrupted Ross with a cry to the same purport. "Men, friends," exclaimed St. Clair, "can you wish me to live dishonoured, that you use the only means that can dissuade me from my purpose?"

"No," replied M'Gregor, "but prudence is sometimes better than courage: to go now to the court of Scotland, would be to brave danger, to die the death of fools. Think you, St. Clair, that vengeance sleeps? or that the death of the duke of Albany, his sons, and that of the earl of Lenox, is forgotten*? No,

* These noblemen were condemned to death by James I. Their crime is not specified by historians.

No, the world yet remembers that the tyrant sent in triumph to the widowed countess the bleeding heads of her sons, of her father, and of her husband. Preserve your life then, and those of your friends, for a better cause than petty animosity. Stay till you shall be called upon in the cause of your country, and live or fall nobly."

"And let the villain Roskelyn revel in my wealth, and even refuse to pay those just debts which necessity forces me to contract?"

"Could you gratify your enemies more than by subjecting yourself to the penalty annexed to your returning from your outlawry?" asked Hamilton.

St. Clair paused. "I will think till to-morrow," answered he; "Monteith must live with honour, or he must cease to live."

"Perish the paltry consideration of distinct property among us!" said Ross.

"What

"What man here has not shared St. Clair's? and what right has he to claim a superiority of friendship over us? The man who cannot receive an act of kindness is unworthy to confer one."

One of the party, named Randolph, who was intimately acquainted with all St. Clair's misfortunes, then spoke. He was elder brother to M'Gregor, of the same character, but more deeply colour-ed. "The tide of passion must have way," said he, "and those who attempt to stem its course may be likened to those who reason with madmen. St. Clair, we all know, values not his own life, but he will be careful of those of his friends. Ross, Hamilton, De Bourg, and M'Gregor, must therefore remain with him in Barra. For me, held here by no law, unknown at the court of James, and a stranger to John of Ros-kelyn, I am a proper messenger to carry St. Clair's demand. Myself, and an-other

other in similar circumstances, will repair to the south with his order; and from the result of our errand he can form his future designs."

All approved of this measure except St. Clair; but the danger of his friends abated his ardour, and made him deliberate on the subject.

"For this time give way," said Ross; "if Randolph brings not back an answer to your wishes, every voice, as well as arm is in your favour. We will raise the men of the islands, and away to Scotland, call together the vassals of your uncle's house, those of mine and of all our friends; then claim our freedom, rights, and property; obtain them, or perish in the attempt."

This arrangement was so warmly seconded, that Monteith was forced to yield, and that perhaps the more willingly, as he conceived that Randolph, being a stranger, incurred no danger. All the party

party who were free claimed the privilege of accompanying Randolph, who, at length, instead of one companion, was obliged to accept of three; and having made a provision for the journey, and being well armed, they resolved to adventure with the first fair wind to Scotland, in one of the fishing-boats that lay on the coast.

In the intervening time, a private consultation had taken place between Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and Randolph, in which the three first empowered the last to claim, on their respective estates, what sums of money were due to them, and to give their discharge; for the property of Monteith, as principal, had alone been confiscated.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.



All being prepared, Randolph and his companions, simply clothed as men of the common rank departed; St. Clair giving them a letter to this purport:—



" *To the Agent CARNEGIE.*

"Whereas, I some time since sent an order on you for the payment of twenty marks, which sum you have refused to discharge, this is to command the payment of sixty, a small sum compared to what you have of mine in your hands. see therefore that it be paid, or I shall be necessitated to enforce the demand in person, at once, from the villain who usurps

usurps my right, and from you, the despicable tool of his treachery.

St. Clair Monteith."

The journey, after they reached the main land of Scotland, was long; but they lost no time on their way; and reaching Edinburgh, they presented St. Clair's letter to the agent. He perused it with visible emotion; but carefully examining the messengers, and finding nothing in their personal appearance to alarm his fears, he answered them haughtily, ordering them to attend on the morrow at Roskelyn.

"Troth, master, will we," replied Randolph, assuming a language suitable to his habit, "and I hope you will then dispatch our business, for we are not used to dance attendance like courtly lackeys, and cannot easily brook it. We ask, I presume, nothing but what is the

brave

brave St. Clair's right, and it would not be honest or mannerly to refuse it, as that might give him the trouble to come himself."

"Insolent varlet," replied Carnegie, "know you that St. Clair dares not shew his face in Scotland, under forfeiture of his life?"

"Marry, I know not the place where St. Clair *dares* not shew his face; and for his life, whoever attempts that, with all submission, will rouse a hornet's nest."

"Do you threaten, villain?" said Carnegie.

"Marry, Heaven forbid!" answered Randolph; "we poor lads of the isles are not given to threaten; we are not courtiers, master; we are more for deeds than words."

Carnegie viewed the party suspiciously. "I will consult the lord of Roskelyn," said he; "meet me at his castle

 to-morrow,

to-morrow, at noon." So saying, he left them; and they retired to procure rest and refreshment.

Careful to their appointment, Randolph and his companions reached Roskelyn at the appointed hour. For a considerable time they waited in the outward court, subjected to the gaze and rude jests of the lackeys, who, usually imitating the manners of their masters, and wanting their education and rank, convert pride and haughtiness into vulgar rudeness and illiberal insolence.

At length they were summoned into the great hall, where, seated on costly chairs, covered with rich embroidery, sat the lord of Roskelyn, and his haughty, but beautiful countess, surrounded by a numerous train of ladies and attendants.

Judging by the rudeness of the strangers' appearance, they were astonished

to

to see them shew no signs of admiration or restraint at the grandeur and pomp around them; for Randolph entered with a careless, unembarrassed air, his cap upon his head, and his left arm wrapped in his plaid.

"You come from the outlaw St. Clair," said the earl; "know you the consequence of making a demand of property no longer his; ever mine by right, but now mine, both by justice and the will of the king?"

"Marry, I understand not that," replied Randolph; "it may however be the courtly fashion; but in the isles, no king has a right to rob a man of his own."

"Rude clown," said Carnegie, who stood at a humble distance from the earl, "know you to whom you speak thus rudely, and in whose presence you stand, that you do not move your cap?"

"I speak to John of Roskelyn, I trow;

I told you before I knew no courtly fashions. I wear my cap, for I took cold by waiting so long among the lackeys in the entry."

"The lackeys surely are company good enough for thee," said the lady Roskelyn; "but thou hast learned insolence from thy employer."

"I came not to talk with women," replied Randolph; "I am afraid of their tongues. Will the demand of St. Clair be paid?"

"It will not," answered Roskelyn; "and mark my words, rogue, if thou dost not depart hence immediately, I will punish thee for thy insolence."

"Punish me!" repeated Randolph; "if all rogues were punished, honest men would have their right."

"Wilt thou, once more I repeat it, take thy answer and be gone, ere I make thee repent thy daring?"

"A time will come for repentance for all,"

all," answered Randolph, contemptuously throwing down his glove. So saying, without waving his cap, or bending his body, he and his companions prepared to leave the hall.

"Come back," cried Roskelyn; "what meanest thou by throwing down thy glove? thou surely, hind as thou art, dost not carry thy insolence far enough to defy me!"

"I mean," answered Randolph, "that who will may pick it up; and should any one defy *me*, though it were even John of Roskelyn, I would answer as a man."

"Villain! thou art not what thou seemest," exclaimed Roskelyn.

"My good lord," said the countess, "why lose you your temper with thi wretch, who, rude as the *catterenes* *, among whom he dwells, is sent purposely to affront you? give him in charge

* Highland banditti.

to your vassals; in the prison of the castle let him learn respect."

"In the halls of the castle—nay, lady, in your bridal chamber, learn you that truth and modesty is the crown of a woman; and that she who prostitutes her person, though under the sanction of marriage, is little better than a harlot."

"Insufferable insolence!" exclaimed Roskelyn; "seize and bear these men to the prison of the tower—I repeat, they are not what they seem; and the public tranquillity may require them to be punished."

"And who will punish us?" replied Randolph; "not John of Roskelyn, I trow? his fears wont let him, whatever his inclination may be. Come, lead the way," continued he, addressing his companions; "the air of this perfumed hall is too heavy for me—I love a purer atmosphere."

"Away

"Away with him—I will hear no more," cried Roskelyn.

"Marry, but you will, and shortly too; you have a long account to discharge."

The attendants prevented more, by attempting to seize Randolph and his companions; but drawing their broadswords from under their garments, they cleared the way to the gates, where, mounting their horses, they soon lost sight of the towers of Roskelyn, and using their utmost speed, reached the Frith of Forth, which having crossed, they proceeded to St. John's Town, Perth, were they refreshed themselves and their beasts, considering themselves secure from the pursuit of Roskelyn.

The business they had to transact for Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, now alone prevented their return to the island. That of Ross was in the shire of Inverness; that of M'Gregor nearly

in the same place; and Hamilton's near where they then were.

A few days completed the last named; they then journeyed to Inverness, and received various sums for Ross; but the person Randolph was the most anxious to see was his elder brother, sir Alexander M'Gregor, who at this time happened to be about as far distant as Tiviotdale, upon the English borders.

Since the outlawry of his younger brother James, sir Alexander had received his revenues with unblemished honor, and protected his property from depredation. Randolph's wish, however, to see him, was not solely on account of pecuniary concerns, but also to consult him on the measures the outlaws should pursue, as he had no doubt but St. Clair would be deaf to all but revenge.

After consulting with his companions, they dispatched a trusty messenger to bear a letter to Barra, which was to in-

form

form St. Clair that their absence would be unavoidably protracted two months longer; but fearful of exasperating him, they palliated as much as possible the conduct of Roskelyn; and concluded by entreating him to bear all with patience until their return, which was only delayed by their wish to consult sir Alexander M'Gregor on the proper steps to pursue.

This point arranged, they departed for the south, clothed and accoutred in a manner suitable to their rank; and reaching Tiviotdale, enjoyed the satisfaction of meeting the elder M'Gregor.

A wary politician, as well as a brave warrior, sir Alexander for the present disapproved all hostile measures, as he conceived they must ultimately end in ruin. "James," said he, "is daily more obnoxious to the people; but for the present, surrounded with power, all attempts would be vain. St. Clair's cause

is just, and I would willingly hazard my life to reinstate him in his right: but let us act with prudence, and though we delay the blow, let it be decisive when it falls. My fortune he is welcome to share, and let him not hesitate, for I feel assured the day will come when he can repay all his friends."

As sir Alexander M'Gregor meant speedily to return to the Highlands, Randolph and his companions awaited his leisure, in order to accompany him; so that their stay from Barra, by the length of their journey, the delay of business, and other unavoidable causes, had been prolonged to near four months, three of which had elapsed since they quitted Roskelyn.

All being prepared, they took the way homeward; the elder M'Gregor, with four domestics, and Randolph and his companions, in all forming a company of nine.

On

On the second evening, passing a desolate and extensive moor, a horseman overtook them, his clothes and accoutrements richly emblazoned with the arms and devices of the house of Roskelyn.

"Give you good even!" said Randolph, "you ride hastily—serve you the earl of Roskelyn?"

"No, the dowager countess is my lady; she is behind in a covered litter."

"A rich mistress, friend, and fame says, one amongst the fairest of our Scottish dames."

"Troth was she, and even now might vie with most, not more than forty-four summers having passed over her."

"You may then expect a new lord: for, personal attractions added to her wealth, she cannot fail of suitors."

"She doth not, but their suit is vain; all her affections appear wedded to her grandson, the young Montrose of Roskelyn,

kelyn, who for the last two months has been her guest at Eusdale: she is now conducting him home."

"The child must be young," answered Randolph; "methinks it is not long since the earl was wedded."

"It is nearly three years," replied the man, "but the child hath not more than two months completed his first year, yet is a fine hearty lad. But farewell, masters; the evening draws in, and I ride forward to procure entertainment befitting the quality of the noble guests."

So saying, he set spurs to his beast, and soon lost sight of the party. Randolph at the same time made a stop, and exclaimed—"Brother, revenge is in our power—St. Clair shall be free; for you will not surely refuse to join in a plan that cannot fail to liberate him."

"I see none that is at present likely to effect that purpose," said M'Gregor; "if you depend on the dowager of Ros-

kelyn,

kelyn, she is among the greatest of his enemies."

"I know that well—I expect nothing from her; but what think you of making the young Montrose the hostage for his father's honour? Once in the islands, Roskelyn, nor even James himself dare attack the outlaws; or should they, they could away to Norway, and be secure from danger."

"By mine honour, 'tis a noble daring, if it could be done with safety."

"Safety!" repeated Randolph; "armed as we are, we need not fear treble our number; the night draws on too, and our persons are unknown; and for the present, it will only be surmised an incursion of the English for the sake of ransom."

M'Gregor, after some consideration, agreed to the plan, if it should seem practicable; and calling his party together, they were acquainted with the

scheme

scheme in agitation, and sworn to secrecy.

The business was scarcely arranged, when the cavalcade approached; four horseman rode before the litter, six behind, and two on each side, a number thought fully adequate, as the country was then at peace. Randolph, as projector of the plan, rode first and ordered them to halt, which they refused; but rushing forward, he in a moment threw down the driver, and a scene of universal confusion ensued; for, uncertain of the strength of their assailants, their fears, and the darkness of the night, multiplied their number.

"Let no man stir?" exclaimed Randolph; "we mean no injury; our business is a few words with the countess; we will effect our purpose, or perish—opposition is useless."

The domestics were however true to their trust, until, seeing some of their companions

companions fall an easy prey to the superior skill and valour of Randolph and his party, they fled, or, crying for mercy, threw down their arms. Randolph then approached the litter, in which was seated the dowager of Roskelyn, and three female attendants, one of whom held the young Montrose on her knees, in so sound a sleep, that all the confusion had not awakened him.

The lady Roskelyn was busied in taking off her bracelets and jewels, to present to the supposed robbers; but putting back her hand, Randolph said—

"Keep your trinkets, lady; the young lord of Roskelyn is our aim; he shall, however, be safely returned for ransom, and carefully nurtured during the intervening time." So saying, he stretched out his arms for the child; but lady Roskelyn, throwing herself on her knees, entreated him to relinquish his purpose. Her prayers were vain; for Randolph was

was deaf to her entreaties, and callous to her tears; and again ordering the trembling woman who held the child to resign him, she reluctantly complied. Wrapping the infant within his cloak; and pressing him to his rough breast, he said to the lady—"Fear not for the boy; did our hearts want affection, even as much as yours hath hitherto done, this child is secure from danger; for *interest*, the force of which you are well acquainted with, will keep him safe. Farewell."

"Say then where you bear him," exclaimed she in an agony of grief, "that the demanded ransom may be prepared and sent?"

"To England. Rest satisfied with the promise obtained."

So saying, he gave the word to his companions, who, turning their horses, retook their way towards the English border, the better to deceive and prevent pursuit.

After

After a journey of some miles, the party, commodiously concealed between two mountains, sent forward one of their companions to procure wine, meat, and bread, which Randolph offered the infant when he awoke at day-break.

Looking round, for a few moments he cried bitterly, but in a short time appeared sensible of the caresses of his hardy nurse, examined him carefully, played with his sword, and at length took the food offered him.

"By mine honour," said sir Alexander, laughing, "nature made a strange mistake, when she deemed thee a warrior, for thou art one of the most expert nurses I ever saw."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Randolph, "if not corrupted by the court, and the pride and arrogance of his family, I'll warrant he'll be a noble fellow; he

drinks

drinks wine already like an outlaw; methinks he resembles St. Clair."

After more conversation of the same nature, they all partook of some refreshment; then remounting their horses, which they had left to graze, they took the way to Dumfries, the young lord of Roskelyn placed before Randolph, apparently well pleased with the novelty of all around him.

Taking a short repose at Dumfries, they proceeded to Kirkcudbright, where, finding a vessel bound to Port Patrick, they immediately embarked, and with a fair wind reached Ireland.

Fearful of injuring the infant's health by a continued travel, they devoted a few days to rest; during which time they engaged a careful nurse to attend him. They then procured a second vessel to convey them to Barra, leaving sir Alexander and his attendants, who,

after

after remaining a few weeks in Ireland, returned to his paternal home.

During this interval, the news of the loss of the child had reached his parents; messengers were dispatched in all quarters, in order to obtain information, and particularly to England, where they had no doubt he had been conveyed; for the most distant idea of his being taken for the purpose of liberating St. Clair never intruded; and though the earl of Roskelyn had no doubt but Randolph and his companions were not what their dress appeared to denote, yet the length of time since their departure, and their destination to the islands, and the capture of his child on the English borders, completely baffled all suspicion respecting them, and forced him to yield to time the development of what he could not comprehend.

In daily expectation of the ransom for the child being claimed, the countess,

tess, in the interim, gave birth to a second son, who, though not able to banish the remembrance of their loss, at least alleviated its bitterness.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

Randolph and his companions having reached the shores of Barra, the party landed; and leaving the nurse to follow, took the way to the fortress, Randolph carrying the young Roskelyn, who was grown so attached to him, that he preferred him to every other person.

In their passage from the shore they met a piper, whom Randolph ordered to precede them, playing one of his most lively airs; and thus arranged, they reached the tower of M'Leod.

St. Clair and his companions were in the hall, when the mingled sounds of the pipe, a loud exclamation of triumph, and the horn at the gate, struck his ear.

"By

"By Heaven!" cried he, starting up, "'tis surely Randolph; but why such sounds of satisfaction is beyond my comprehension."

As he spoke, he rushed forward, but was met at the entrance by Randolph, who exclaimed—"Triumph, St. Clair! I bring thee a noble prisoner, a mine of wealth? and what is yet more precious, I have wrung the hearts of all thine enemies. Nay, man, never gape with wonder—hold out thy arms and receive my charge—'tis a noble gift—no less, by my soul, than the heir of the house of Roskelyn, the young Montrose."

St. Clair appeared transfixed with astonishment, his eyes rivetted on the child, but drew back his hands, as though they had recoiled from a serpent. "It is impossible!" at length cried he; "but even supposing it as you say, what is the child of John of Roskelyn to me?"

"What a question!" answered Randolph; "the son of John of Roskelyn is to thee wealth, liberty, rank, and fortune restored."

"I know not how," replied St. Clair; "but prithee, Randolph, explain this mysterious jest, for I am convinced it is a jest."

"'Tis the most true one then," answered Randolph, "thou ever heardst. In few words, Roskelyn behaved like a villain, and fortune threw revenge in my way, in the person of this boy, whom thou mayst be assured his parents will be glad to regain at the expence of all they have purloined from thee."

"Poor child!" said St. Clair emphatically, "art thou too doomed to suffer for the crimes of thy parents?"

"Suffer!" repeated Randolph; "no sufferings are attached to the part he has

has to act; and as to the family of Roskelyn, their punishment is deserved."

"It is," answered, St. Clair; "but excuse me, Randolph—I will never owe the recovery of my right to this child."

Randolph looked displeased—"Thus it is," said he, "that over-officious friendship is ever repaid."

"Dear Randolph," exclaimed St. Clair, "I feel the extent of your friendship in its full force; but consider with what eyes I must view this child: on one side, the offspring of pride, dissimulation, and avarice; on the other, of treachery, meanness, and falsehood."

"By my life," said Ross, "if the boy inherits those qualities, they bear good features."

"He strikingly resembles St. Clair," observed Hamilton.

"Truly doth he," said the chevalier.

"Harkee,

"Harkee, St. Clair, is there any natural cause for the likeness?"

"A truce with jests!" replied St. Clair; "for pity's sake, Randolph, explain this business."

Randolph then related the whole account of his expedition, including the small hopes sir Alexander entertained of success, in an attempt at the present period to recover St. Clair's property, and concluded his relation by saying—"On our arrival in Ireland I was heartily weary of nursing, and engaged the old woman to supply my place. Little explanation was necessary with her, and that simply was, that I was conveying the child to you, its father, its mother being lately dead; and for a name, thinking it prudent to sink that of Montrose of Roskelyn, I gave him in lieu that of Randolph Monteith; and, in faith, I think you may be proud of your son."

Whatever St. Clair's thoughts were, he suppressed them, only saying—"I should be sincerely sorry if by this business, as the persons of children alter greatly, he should hereafter be disowned by his family, and declared an impostor."

"That I defy them to do," replied Randolph; "Nature herself has stamped his birthright beyond all power of dispute;" so saying, he stripped up the young Montrose's sleeve, and shewed his right arm, which was wine-marked, of the colour of blood, from the wrist to the elbow.

"A providential mark," said St. Clair; "and, as you say, cannot fail to identify him at any future period—as for taking ransom, I decline it. But more of this subject hereafter; come on—our cellar shall testify we rejoice at your return; even Roskelyn shall be forgotten; this night we give to joy. To-morrow we will

will talk of business." So saying, they seated themselves at table, and gave the evening to conviviality until they retired to rest.

Even wine had not power to banish from the mind of St. Clair what had passed. In the lonely quiet of his chamber every unpleasant occurrence returned with redoubled violence; he felt, as he had before truly said, the full force of Randolph's friendship, which had made him stoop to a deed he deemed dishonourable, but which Randolph thought no more of than taking a captive in battle. "Ah, St. Clair," said he mentally, "how art thou fallen! pupil of the valiant and noble Monteith, wouldst thou be worthy thy tutor, to owe thy freedom to a child! Revenge indeed is mine; but this is not the revenge for which my heart thirsts; I would have the vengeance of a man. —Oh, Fortune! give me but once the

means to meet this Roskclyn hand to hand, without the minions that protect him, and if I do not prove his blood base, and mine true, may the curse remain upon me for ever!"

How to act in respect to the child, he knew not—to return him was impossible, without involving Randolph in disgrace, and himself in a quarrel with one who had so truly exerted his friendship for him, and indeed with all his companions; for they all appeared to consider such a prisoner as Montrose of the utmost consequence, as at any time he would enable either St. Clair or themselves to make their own terms.

On the ensuing day a distant apartment in the fortress was appointed for the child and his nurse. St. Clair, however, felt the most lively vexation on being necessitated to pass for his father; but Randolph having made that declaration to the nurse, it became absolutely

necessary

necessary to continue the deception, lest a change might excite suspicion.

In a short time the young Randolph, as he was called, became the favourite of the whole party, except St. Clair, who always viewed him with a mixture of concern; and if not with dislike, a sentiment nearly resembling it, for he recalled to his memory many unpleasant circumstances. Such, however, is the power of infancy and innocence over a heart naturally kind, that he frequently forgot his disgust, to answer his infantile caresses; but the tender name of father, which young Randolph began to articulate plainly, ever acted like an electric shock, and never failed to awaken all the discordant passions of his soul.

Young Roskelyn had been about two months at Barra, when one of the fishing vessels brought a stranger, who inquired for St. Clair; and being admitted into the fortress, Monteith was astonish-

ed to see a young lad whose appearance bespoke him to be far superior to their general visitors.

He was formed with the slightest, but most graceful symmetry; and his face exhibited a model of natural beauty, at once bespeaking sweetness and dignity. On his entrance, bowing his head—"My business is with the chief, St. Clair Monteith—I pray you direct me to him."

"I am so called," replied Monteith; "and pleasant, I ween, must the business be that is borne by such a messenger."

"I trust so; five weeks since I left the court of Scotland, and before my departure was entrusted with a small casket to deliver here, if occasion suited. To effect this I have crossed from Ross-shire, and rejoice to have executed the task requested." So saying, he delivered a small box, carefully sealed, into the hands of St. Clair, who said—

"Gentle

"Gentle youth, you can perhaps inform me of the contents, and favour me with the name of those who sent it."

"My orders went no further than to deliver it," answered he; "perhaps more information may be contained within; so please you, I will retire while you examine it."

"Not so," answered St. Clair, "I pray you be seated." So saying, he broke the seal and opened the casket, where, to his great astonishment, the first article that presented was a gold chain, that had appertained to his uncle Monteith, with various other jewels; under these a purse containing sixty marks, and at the bottom of the casket, a letter to this import:—

"The enclosed jewels and money appertaining to St. Clair Monteith, are remitted to him by a friend. For the present he is requested to bear his situation with patience, as any attempt to

leave the islands would end in his destruction, his enemies only wanting a pretence to take a life which keeps them in perpetual dread for their own. By the messenger let him remit some trifling memorial that the casket has been received."

"Strange!" exclaimed St. Clair—"that the jewels were my uncle's and afterwards mine, is most true; but how these should escape the general wreck is beyond comprehension; the money too.—Indeed, my good youth, thou must tell me who this unknown friend is, that if ever occasion serves, I may thank him."

"I am a lad, chief," replied he, "but I can keep a secret like a man; and pardon me, but it becomes you not to tamper for a friend's secrets."

"Truly said, my brave boy; but is there no middle way? John of Roskelyn, nor the agent Carnegie, have nothing

nothing to do with this business, I ween?"

"Nothing, on mine honour."

"Yet my whole property is in their hands."

"It is; but it is impossible for them to sell or alienate it."

"Undoubtedly not; but then it becomes the property of another, and I have no right."

"You have a just right to what I have brought, and most probably will hear again from the same quarter; but your friend must choose another messenger, for I love not to be too closely questioned."

"The gift, for I can consider it no other, would lose half its value by any other hand—thy spirit charms me. But say, I pray thee, as thou cam'st from court, how tends all there?"

"Not pleasantly; the king is at va-

riance with many of his nobles, who lament the loss of the old regent. The earl of Roskelyn, three months since, lost his son near the English borders, and can since obtain no tidings of him."

"A severe grief," said St. Clair.

"Yes, to the earl and dowager; but the lady Roskelyn bears it bravely."

"'Tis well! yet a mother's feelings are said to be the most acute."

"True; but if I mistake not, the lady Roskelyn was never famed for the softer qualities of her sex."

"Justly observed; I find thou knowest her; her face and heart are at variance; the first is fair and beautiful—the second hard, false, and ungrateful."

"You speak feelingly, chief; the world says she treated you unworthily."

"Thou

"Thou art a shrewd youth. What age art thou?"

"Nineteen."

"Thou appear'st not near so much. I fear to offend by questions, but hast thou preferment near the court?"

"No—I love it not; even this island is more pleasant to me than the court of James."

"That is strange; but thou wilt hereafter think otherwise: a few years over, and the down of manhood on thy chin, the courtly dames will emulate each other for thy favour."

"And when they have gained it, throw me away from them, for the first fool who has more rank or wealth than myself. Think you not so, chief?"

"Faith! like enough," replied St. Clair; "but, notwithstanding thy youth, thou appearest to be forewarned, and must therefore act with caution."

"I mean it; the woman on whom I

bestow my heart shall give proofs, not only that she prefers me to all others, but if occasion so wills it, shall be content to share poverty, sorrow, and unmerited disgrace with me; she shall likewise yield up without a sigh the vanities of the world, for the privilege of reigning sole empress over my heart."

"Thou art a romantic lad, and think'st like nineteen; but when thou meetest this phœnix, I pray thee give her this chain, and tell her that St. Clair honours her above all women."

"Not so; have you forgotten she is to be superior to a love of trinkets? That gold chain, in the exhausted state of your finances, may be more usefully employed. I will only a ring, or some article of small value, to convey to your friend, that he may know I have executed his commands."

"Thou shalt, but for thyself, I insist that thou takest a memorial of me; were

were I more fortunate, I would wish thy further acquaintance: as it is, I need no more companions in sorrow; but should ever ill fortune so far assail thee as to render so poor a friend necessary, I prithee note in thy memory St. Clair."

"I will," answered the youth, kissing his hand. "Time and chance happeneth to all; and rest assured, the fortune of Monteith will again change. That he hath friends to whom his happiness is truly dear, rest assured, and who will lose no opportunity to forward his interest."

"Why not gratify my curiosity by naming those friends?" said St. Clair; "at least tell me *thy* name."

"Ambrose—parents I have none, but a tyrannic guardian embitters my days."

"Poor youth; but thou hast a friend, for him thou namest mine is doubt-

less

less think, by the trust reposed in thee."

"He is; but, alas! his means are limited as mine own; could he act according to his wishes, not only wealth and rank would be St. Clair's, but every worldly blessing."

"I thank thee for him; but thy fascinating discourse hath made me regardless of the rights of hospitality; I will present thee to my friends, and thou must gratify us by tarrying a short time with us to repose thyself."

"It is impossible; I must away to-morrow."

"I grieve at it—take this ring, I pray thee, for a token to my unknown friend, and tell him that St. Clair's life gains value from his affection. For thyself, I insist thou wearest this chain—nay, I will not be refused," added he, throwing it round his neck, "in faith, thy complexion

plexion might vie with the snow of our mountains, for it shames that of the fairest maid I ever saw."

"Nay, chief," replied the youth, blushing, "reproach me not with what I cannot help; if I cannot otherwise gain a more manly appearance, I will try the wintry winds of Barra, and the summer sun."

"And welcome shalt thou be; but come—our board waits; thou wilt neither find courtly provision nor a courtly welcome, only plain food, and rude honest hearts, more ready to act than to promise." So saying, St. Clair led the way to the hall, where he introduced the youthful Ambrose to his companions, who received him with the kindness and cordiality his errand demanded.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.



St. Clair placed his guest by his side at the social board, and the rest being seated around, they vied with each other in attention to the stranger, who ate and spoke little. The meat being withdrawn, in vain he was urged to take wine; he said it made him sick and feverish, and all their repeated instances could obtain was to make him mingle a small quantity with the water he drank.

The chevalier sat next him, and appeared to view him with an attention that evidently gave him pain; and at length, addressing him, he said—"In faith, sweet youth, I have seen some of

the

the fairest hands in the French, the English, and the Scottish courts, but thine exceeds them all."

"I love not compliments," replied the youth, "and should least have expected to find them at Barra."

"Truth ought to be met with every where," replied De Bourg.

"I must endeavour then to bronze my complexion, if it will save me from unpleasant remarks."

"The chevalier is a Frenchman," said St. Clair; "and thou doubtless hast heard, Ambrose, they inherit from nature the gift of flattery; besides, 'tis so long since he possessed the virtue of modesty, that he hath forgotten it, and can make no allowance for thine."

"I will take lessons from thee, thou woman-hater, but the hour will come when I shall see thee as docile to the sex as I myself am inclined to be."

"I know not when; my heart is

whole

whole now, and I will take care to preserve it so."

Ross, Hamilton, and the rest, then joined in the conversation, on various topics. The stranger appeared well acquainted with every subject, and possessed of a thorough knowledge of the court and its dependants, but gave his opinion with modesty and reserve.

They sat till the night was far advanced, when St. Clair shewed his guest to an apartment in the fortress, when, taking his hand, he wished him a good rest.

At an early hour St. Clair arose, the occurrences of the former day having kept him waking. The mysterious manner of his receiving the jewels and money puzzled his imagination; that the first were his own he could not mistake, and appeared only sent to ascertain that the money remitted he had an equal right to. The earl of Roskelyn, his inveterate

veterate enemy, his countess, or the dowager, he too well knew to expect any thing from them, and whom else could be in possession of his jewels? Thus thinking, he walked down to the sea-shore, where, to his great astonishment, he beheld the little fishing-vessel that had brought the stranger quitting the coast, being already at some distance from the land. Gazing at it, to his further amazement he discovered on the deck the youthful Ambrose, who waved his white hand, and then, as if to testify his friendship, laid it on his breast. St. Clair involuntarily raised his, as if to pray his return, but in vain; the vessel pursued her way, though the strained eyes of St. Clair could discover the graceful form of the youth in the same posture while she remained in sight.

Vexed and lost in a labyrinth of conjecture, he returned to the fortress, and calling together his friends, informed them

of

of the strange departure of Ambrose. Their opinions were various; some regarded him as a spy sent by the house of Roskelyn, and congratulated St. Clair and themselves that the child had not been seen by him.

Others deemed his errand merely as he himself had given out, from a concealed friend of St. Clair's, in which opinion himself joined, only the private departure of Ambrose made him somewhat waver.

"My opinion differs from you all," said the chevalier; "you think like men and warriors—I consider the subject as a Frenchman, and an admirer of beauty; and my surmises were not lost, I am convinced, on Ambrose, as he calls himself. I was somewhat at first inclined to think St. Clair in the secret, but am now convinced of the contrary. The feminine lightness of figure, the extraordinary beauty of features, the delicacy

cacy of complexion, the softness of the eyes, the ivory whiteness and form of the hands—and if all these do not confirm it, the palpitation of my own heart when I sat next this Ambrose, convinces me that our visitor is either a woman or an angel in disguise."

"Ridiculous?" cried St. Clair; "for what purpose should a woman, and such a woman, come to the isle of Barra?"

"In troth, to comfort thee," replied the chevalier. "Oh! would to fortune she had come on such a charitable errand to me! Hadst thou possessed aught but a heart of stone, thou must have discovered the secret."

A short consideration made many of the party espouse this opinion, nor did they fail to attribute the sudden departure to a fear of discovery, which the ardent gaze of the chevalier might have rendered probable.

St. Clair treated the whole with ridicule,

cule, though the suspicions of De Bourg were not without their effect upon his mind, and he was no sooner alone, than he walked to the chamber where the stranger had reposed.

Here fresh astonishment awaited him, for on the table lay the golden chain, and by it the tablets of Ambrose, in which were written:—

"Oppressed by your generosity, which in the present state of your affairs is mistimed, I return your gift, not for want of value for the donor, but because you may appropriate it in a manner more consonant to my wishes. In the mean time, be assured that your friends will be anxious for your welfare, and among them none more so than

AMBROSE."

St. Clair, puzzled with various conjectures, endeavoured to recall to mind the discourse he had when alone with

the

the youthful stranger, and which rather confirmed than refuted the chevalier's conjectures; yet, unwilling to give into an idea that caused him increased vexation, he endeavoured to banish it from his mind.

"No, no," said he, "the supposition is vague and ridiculous, and built merely on the beauty of the boy's face, and the delicacy of his person—his manners too are effeminate, but then his understanding appears strong and cultivated. He has also imbibed romantic notions of love and friendship; the latter, his leaving the fortress privately, rather than take the chain, most evidently proves.—No, if I could think this stranger a woman, I would decline using the money so remitted. The jewels to a certainty confirm my right; and I will not, for the absurdity of De Bourg, deprive myself of what is at this time so essential."

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As no more was heard of the stranger, and as his mysterious visit was followed by no particular consequence, he insensibly became daily less thought of in the fortress. The active mind, however, of St. Clair was neither insensible nor forgetful of the kindness he had received from his unknown friend, nor of the injuries he had received from the house of Roskelyn, and ardently as he wished to repay the first, no less ardently did he long to revenge the latter.

An epidemic sickness that had for some months ravaged the neighbouring isles, at this period reached Barra, and all the kindness of the inhabitants of the fortress was called forth to assist the distressed sufferers. Alive to humanity, they liberally shared their stores with the sick, and personally went among them to see the most proper means used to extirpate the malady. Though fearless of danger, the infection at length reached

reached them, and the tower of M'Leod, in its turn, became a receptacle of sick warriors. Death equally attacks the weak and powerful; and among the first who fell a sacrifice, was the friendly Randolph, a loss that was speedily followed by two more of the party that had joined the outlaws.

Even James M'Gregor himself, though much distressed at his brother's death, did not apparently feel it so severely as did St. Clair; he watched his friend day and night with unwearied assiduity, and saw the deadly ravages of disease with an anguish he could not entirely conceal from the sufferer, who himself died as he lived, insensible of danger, and fearless of death.

"St. Clair," said he, some hours before his decease, "my strength fails me, but my heart is still the same; one of its warmest wishes is, that thou may'st

be avenged of the house of Roskelyn; promise me, therefore, that thou wilt not deprive thyself of the means which fortune made me the instrument of putting into thy hands. When occasion serves, thou canst bring forward the boy; or if a length of time should first elapse, thou wilt have the satisfaction of controverting nature, and, if he doth not inherit too much of his father and mother, of making him a brave fellow, and an honest man; and these qualities once having taken root, they may find some trouble to displace them. As to the arrangement of my property, that I have settled with my brother, and entirely to his liking; and I only require a promise from thee to act according to my wishes, after which I shall have nothing to do but to resign myself to the fate which awaits me. Yet, St. Clair, if hereafter spirits live, in the

hour of retribution remember that of Randolph shall hover over thee—give me thy hand, and promise."

St. Clair swore to act according to the desire of Randolph, who, after shaking hands with all the residents at the fortress, composed himself for some hours, when, turning suddenly, and seeing St. Clair pensively sitting by his side, he said—"Monteith, thou art weak as a woman; had I fallen in the field, thou wouldst not have been thus sad—away with grief; death is the common lot of all, and to a mind resolved, less painful than thou thinkest. Farewell!"

Such were the last words of Randolph, his companions standing round his couch in deep dejection. "Art thou then indeed gone?" said St. Clair; "would that my fortune was for ever Roskelyn's, sooner than I should have seen this day!"

CHAPTER V.



The young heir of Roskelyn, or Randolph as he was called, now two years old, was strong, hardy, and playful as the mountain-kid; too young to recall to his memory the luxurious indulgence at the castle of his father, the sum of all the greatness he wished or desired was confined to Barra. His young heart attached to Randolph, who warmly returned his affection, he had been accustomed to run constantly after him, and not only plainly articulated his name, but could also express his own wants and wishes. His custom was, at early morn, to escape, if possible, from his nurse, and hasten to Randolph's chamber

ber, when, if the door was closed, he beat until it was opened to him, or if unbarred, he climbed upon the couch, and awakened the rough warrior with his caresses. Insensible of the loss of his friend, the morning succeeding his death, he followed his usual custom—the chamber was unbarred, and on the couch lay the lifeless body of Randolph; he climbed up, and with infantile fondness endeavoured to awaken him by his playful caresses, till at length, weary with the unavailing effort, he laid his head upon his bosom, and fell asleep. In this situation he was found by St. Clair, who, entering the chamber of his friend, was astonished to find him so accompanied.

A sentiment of affection which he had never before felt for the infant arose in his bosom, and gently awakening him, he asked him what he did there?

"Warm Raudolph," replied he, shud-

dering with the cold that had communicated itself to his own body; "he wont speak."

"Boy," said St. Clair, scarcely restraining a starting tear, "from whence inheritest thou that sentiment of gratitude?"

"Wake Randolph," continued the child, gazing at him; "he wont love me now."

"For his sake I could almost love thee," said St. Clair; and taking him in his arms, he hastened away to the nurse, whom he chid for her neglect, in suffering him to wander from her; ordering her at the same time to wash him, and change his clothes, to prevent, if possible, the infection.

From this day it appeared that the chief and young Randolph were more warmly attached to each other, so that the first would sometimes say—"Randolph, boy, was thy friend both living and

and dead; for he loved thee living, and by his death has insensibly transferred that affection to me."

The attachment of the islanders to the chief and his friends was strongly exemplified at the funeral of Randolph and the two inmates of the fortress, who dying within a few days of each other, one solemnity served for all. Not only the inhabitants of Barra attended, but also several hundreds from the adjacent isles repaired thither in whatever vessels they could procure. A priest also attended from Kismul; and, all prepared, the bodies were deposited in the highest part of the island.

The funeral procession was commenced by pipers playing martial tunes, after which was borne the armour of Randolph, with his spear and sword reversed. Then walked the priest; next came the bodies, borne by men who had served in battle; after them followed the

the inhabitants of the fortress, armed, but their heads uncovered, and their swords pointed to the earth; and lastly, the numerous visitors that had assembled on the occasion, with their heads bare, and who at intervals filled the air with piercing and monotonous yells of mourning. The bodies deposited, the earth sprinkled with the sacred water, and the holy rites ended, they all returned to the fortress, where a plentiful entertainment was provided; which having partaken of, and reposed in the best manner they could during the night, they arose at early dawn, and, the labour rendered light by numbers, they erected a monument of such stones as the island afforded, placing at the top a rude cross, formed of the same materials, to defend those it covered from the power of evil spirits. Pleased with their friendship and attachment, St. Clair and his companions detained them two days, after which,

which, every one took his way to his respective home.

The first effusion of grief over, M'Gregor one day addressing the party, said—"One duty yet remains unperformed to our beloved Randolph. With his own tremulous hand he wrote a testament, which I myself and Hamilton signed. I will take this opportunity to read it." So saying, he unfolded a parchment, and read as follows:—

"Whereas, I Randolph M'Gregor, being called by the will of God to lay down my life in a sickbed, unbefitting a warrior, but best, as he decrees it, I will that my worldly property be disposed as follows:—My brothers, Alexander and James, being well provided with the gifts of fortune, the first from his father, the second by his uncle, I give the whole of my estates, be-

queathed me by my patron, Randolph Bruce, unto St. Clair Monteith, for his natural life; and at his death, to his son, my namesake, the young Randolph—so that if ever I have injured that child, I may make what restitution is in my power. My armour I bequeath to my brother Alexander, my spear and spurs to James, and my sword and shield to St. Clair; praying them to bear my death as becomes men and soldiers that trust to live again—in which hope I die.

RANDOLPH M'GREGOR."

St. Clair heard the will in silence, and appeared lost in thought.

"St. Clair," said Ross, "rise from this grief that clouds thy future prospects. Men, thou knowest, are mortal, and born to die."

"Men are indeed mortal, and while they

they are so, they must feel," replied St. Clair. "I revere the memory of Randolph, and his intention in my favour, but will never profit by it."

"And so be forsworn," answered M'Gregor. "Randolph injured not his family by the bequest, as what he inherited was from Randolph Bruce, who answered for him at the font; thou must therefore keep thy promise to him, or forfeit thy honour."

"Why, good Heaven!" exclaimed St. Clair, "didst thou form me with a mind to confer benefits, yet doom me only to receive them? Oh, Randolph! would I slept at peace with thee, thou zealous and true friend! but, wretch that I am! I am condemned to waste my days in idleness and inglorious ease."

For some time a heavy gloom hung over the inhabitants of the fortress; it at length, however, began to subside,

but least so in St. Clair, whose efforts to appear cheerful were evidently forced. The insult and loss he had endured through the lord of Roskelyn preyed upon his spirits, and though revenge was in his power, in the person of his son, yet it was not that retaliation for which his heart thirsted. For the agent Carnegie, he merely regarded him as he truly was, the creature of the earl, and despised him accordingly.

Some fishermen, who occasionally traded to the main land of Scotland, at this time brought intelligence that a grand tournament of three days' durance was to be held at Perth, in honour of he queen, at which the flower of the Scottish nation, as well as foreigners, were expected to be assembled. St. Clair declared nothing should prevent him going; and, to calm the apprehensions of his companions for his safety, he promised to go disguised, and to enter into

into no quarrel that might endanger his safety.

Though no one approved the plan, yet the heavy oppression that hung over him inclined them to consent, in hopes that it might tend to dissipate it, provided he would select some of his friends to accompany him. This however he warmly declined; but after some consultation on the subject, it was agreed that Ross and De Bourg should be of the party, and three other of their companions, that were unrestrained by law, that in case of danger they might inform M'Gregor and Hamilton, who could at a short notice raise a number of men; which, added to their having the young heir of Roskelyn in their power, might free them from their enemies. The business arranged, they sailed to the isle of Mull, where St. Clair, Ross, and De Bourg, took the

habits of knights, and their companions those of their esquires; and crossing to the main land, passed themselves for Danes, who were curious to see the tournament.

Purchasing chargers, they continued their way, and arrived one day before the celebration of the entertainment at Perth, where, keeping close, and at some distance from the town, they caused no suspicion.

The morning of the tournament was ushered in by music and every demonstration of joy that could be devised; and at the hour of ten, the whole court, and all the knights, assembled on an extensive plain, near the city, to begin the sport. The queen and the ladies sat in front on raised seats, according to their rank and dignity. On one side were placed the king, his courtiers, attendants, and the umpires; on the other, the

the knights and visitors who came to view the tilting; in front of whom were the first candidates for fame and conquest.

St. Clair and his friends gazed fearlessly around: their faces concealed by their visors, they without restraint remarked and recognised several, yet remained themselves unknown. At some distance from the queen sat the dowager of Roskelyn, and her daughter-in-law the young countess. St. Clair, in the glance he cast round, fixed his eyes momentarily on them, but withdrawing them with a sentiment of contempt, he directed his attention to other objects.

The earl of Roskelyn, as he was not among the courtiers or umpires, St. Clair concluded was among the champions, and curiously examined each, to discover him.

The sport at length commenced, and several knights, both Scottish and foreign,

reign, tried their skill and fortune with various success, until at length a young Scottish knight, gallantly accoutred in black embossed armour, advanced, and by the herald proclaimed queen Jane, wife of king James I. of Scotland, the fairest of women, defying all to combat who averred to the contrary.

An English knight accepted the challenge, asserting the superiority of the countess of Salisbury, and the combat began. Equal prowess and dexterity for a time kept the spectators in suspense, but the English knight at length gave way, and the Scot was declared victor. A French knight then took the vanquished's place, but was equally unsuccessful as his predecessor, being obliged to confess the charms of his fair mistress, the duchess of Bedford, sister of the Duke of Burgundy, eclipsed by those of the Scottish queen.

Elated with his triumph, the young knight

knight, taking the arms of the vanquished, and kneeling, laid them at the queen's feet. "Rise, sir knight of Lorn," said she; "though you have chosen a face and person unequal to contend with the peerless beauties of France and England, yet you have supported your claim nobly, and I thank you. Your gallantry must please all women, and well I know there is one who can repay the obligation I owe you. Sir James Stuart, brother to the lord of Lorn, of the noble house of Darnley, though himself a younger branch, may aspire, both from birth and accomplishments, to the highest and fairest of the Scottish maids*."

The queen then turning to her attendants, said—"Call forward the dowager countess of Roskelyn, and pray her to bring in her hand her fair charge, the

* Sir James Stuart, called the Black Knight of Lorn, after the king's death, married the queen.

the heiress of Kintail; I would a short conference with them."

The dowager of Roskelyn immediately advanced with the young maid, whose beauty, added to the queen's request, attracted all eyes but those of St. Clair, who hastily withdrew his from an object so obnoxious as the countess. The heiress of Kintail was dressed in white, her arms and bosom decorated with pearls, her golden locks, held together behind with a cluster of the same, and the luxuriant curls with which nature had decorated her alabaster forehead, confined in proper boundaries by strings of the same construction.

A profound silence reigned throughout the assembly; the dowager and the young maid knelt at the queen's feet, who condescendingly commanded them to rise, and prepared to address them.

"Monteith!" exclaimed De Bourg,

in

in a low voice, but with marked astonishment, "art thou blind? my eyes cannot surely deceive me. Do we not in the heiress of Kintail recognise thy friend Ambrose?"

St. Clair started. "It is impossible," answered he, forgetting the disgust occasioned by the sight of the countess, and gazing ardently on the scene before him. "By Heaven! 'tis like—yet it cannot be. Peace, De Bourg—attend to her voice—if she speaks, I cannot be deceived."

"To the dowager of Roskelyn," said the queen, "the court owes many thanks, for introducing to it one of the fairest ornaments of the country, the heiress of Kintail. To keep her near us is one of our warmest wishes, and if she would accept a husband from the hand of the queen of Scotland, I should be happy to present her my knight, sir James Stuart. To the dowager of Roskelyn,

kelyn, as her guardian, I have some time since expressed my wishes; she coincides with them; and though hitherto maidenly modesty may have restrained the young lady, let me hope that the gallant behaviour of the knight of Lorn this day, added to my desire, as well as that of the king, may influence her to determine in his favour."

The young heiress for some moments appeared confused, but by the time the queen ended, seemed to collect herself, and raising her downcast eyes, she fixed them with dignified composure, first on the queen, and then on the knight of Lorn. "Gracious lady," said she, addressing the queen, "on this subject I have been long persecuted, and have repeatedly, without subterfuge, declared my repugnance to the lady Roskelyn, who, because sir James Stuart is her relation, or for some other cause, wishes me to espouse him. Now, in the pre-

sence

sence of the whole court of Scotland, and of all the nobles from foreign courts, the claim is again brought forward, either because your grace meant to do me public honour, or because the lady Roskelyn, presuming on your grace's power, thought that a maid's courage could not support her in so full an assembly, and that my consent must therefore unavoidably be obtained. To sir James Stuart I owe my thanks for his first address, as his distinguishing me from other women was a compliment I feel the weight of; but I gave him then my answer, and his persecution since becomes neither a noble gentleman, nor a brave and courteous knight. Pardon me, my liege—I am rude, being mountain-born and bred, and become not the manners of the court; and cannot, nay, will not, give my hand without my heart; and my

heart—

heart will never beat in unison with that of the knight of Lorn."

"Amazement!" exclaimed Monteith to De Bourg. "By my soul, 'tis the same!—a woman, and what a woman! an angel in mind and person!"

"Ambrosine," said the dowager of Roskelyn, "know you in whose presence you stand, that you speak thus boldly, and with unthankfulness dash back the happiness offered by the gracious queen?"

"If, indeed," resumed the queen, "your heart was engaged, there might be a subject of excuse; but the lady Roskelyn assures me to the contrary."

"The lady Roskelyn," replied Ambrosine, "though deeply skilled in worldly knowledge, has yet, my liege, to learn to read the human heart."

"Bold, perverse girl," said the dowager, "would you infer to her grace

that

that you have engaged your affections? If you have done so to one worthy you, declare it; if to some low-born wretch, you are beneath my care."

"When, lady, did you ever find me regardless of either my rank in life, or the duties annexed to it? Never will Ambrosine of Kintail prostitute her person by an ill-assorted marriage, nor ever give her heart to one of baser blood than that which flows in *your* own veins."

"Enough," said the king. "You vex the maid; she is fair enough to demand a ten year's siege, and then, by my faith, the man would be well repaid who won her."

"We will then," replied the queen, "grant her a truce; on maturer thoughts, she will, I trust, yield to our wishes."

"To none, so please your grace, in which the knight of Lorn hath a share."

So

So saying, Ambrosine followed the lady Roskelyn to her seat, and the justing recommenced, which, after lasting till the day was far advanced, the king, queen, and court, retired to a grand entertainment, provided on the occasion.

St. Clair and his companions also retired.

"Well," said De Bourg, "how fare you, St. Clair? how beats your heart?"

"In faith, sickly; I am overpowered by surprise and curiosity; I would, if possible, disbelieve my sight; yet the proof is so strong, it is impossible."

"Fortune, thou seest, Monteith, in spite of thy enemies," said Ross, "drops in thy lap."

"In a very humiliating manner," replied St. Clair; "doubtless this fair maid, if it be indeed the identical Ambrose, hearing of my distresses, contrived a way to relieve them—a curse on my

my wayward fortune, for subjecting me to such disgrace!"

"And a curse on my wayward fortune," said De Bourg "for not subjecting me to such disgrace! why, hang thee now, thou phlegmatic Scotchman! I could quarrel with thee, and almost, in sober sadness, cut thy throat. The connexion of the fair Ambrosine with the family of Roskelyn has doubtless put it in her power not only to learn thy story, but also perhaps to save some of thy property from the general destruction; and that to thee is disgrace! Marry, I know but one disgrace in the business, and that is throwing away such a heart as her's upon such a piece of living lumber as thou art."

"On me! ridiculous! could she love a man she never saw"

"Nay, I know not," said Ross, "how that may be, but I think with De Bourg, that love alone could influence

a woman to act as she has done. If thou hast indeed won her heart, gain her hand—it will be glorious revenge on the lady Roskelyn."

"I!" replied St. Clair; "no; no more love for me."

"And why, I pray ye?" said Ross. "Is not this heiress of Kintail as fair as your once boasted Ellen?"

"Granted; she is too fair, and apparently too good for the wife of a ruined outlaw, even if she were willing, which I am far from supposing."

"Ask her the question, man," said the chevalier.

"Yes, and be denied like a fool; no, no, De Bourg, I must first borrow some of thy characteristic impudence."

"Oh to fortune that I could impart a portion!—such a woman! by Heaven, she inspires me!—Am-bro-sine; there is music in the very name; were I in thy place, I would sing it to an hundred different

different tunes; I would write sonnets to her eyes, her nose, her hands, her hair, and defy any man to the death, who should but dare say there was a single defect in her whole composition."

"Noted you the wife of John of Roskelyn?" said Monteith. "From the slight glance I caught, neither her beauty nor spirits appeared lessened by the loss of her son."

"I did," replied Ross; "she seemed uncommonly cheerful. I ever told thee, St. Clair, *that* woman had no heart; but, fascinated with her beauty, thou wert regardless of more substantial qualities."

"I confess it; but it was merely the ebullition of eighteen; I felt for her not love, but frenzy; and the paroxysm once passed, my mind was again itself. I blushed for my folly, and would have given my life to retrieve it."

"I wonder how the heiress of Kintail

came to fall into the hands of the dowager," said De Bourg.

"That I know not, except that I have heard there was once a great intimacy between the lady Kintail and the dowager," replied St. Clair. "Sir John was a brave man, and even of the heiress I have heard much, not only in the shire of Ross, but also in the isle of Sky?"

"Mean you of her beauty, or the qualities of her mind?" said Ross.

"Of both. My uncle Monteith was well beloved by sir John, but death broke off the connexion; he died after my uncle—I should conjecture, not more than two years since."

"What expect you from to-morrow's sport?" said De Bourg.

"I know not—I should like to try a breathing, lest our arms get rusty; but as yet have seen no opponent worth meeting, except this knight of Lorn."

"I heard

"I heard to day," said Ross, "that he is the particular favorite of the queen, and that she neglects no means to promote his fortune; hence her wish to unite him to the heiress.—We will, however, if we find occasion, try a few turns to morrow."

"Agreed," said St. Clair, "though this day has brought forward a discovery that cannot, I think, be equalled by any event of the succeeding one."

CHAPTER VIII.



At an early hour the outlaws hastened to the field of sports. The company was assembled, and the victor of the former day, the knight of Lorn, again proclaimed the charms of his sovereign unrivalled. Twice the trumpet sounded, and no one entered the lists against him: at the third charge it was answered from another part of the field, and suddenly St. Clair stepped forward. "Sir knight," said he, affecting a foreign accent, "are you a lover, and yet stand forth the champion of another lady? If you see not in Ambrosine all perfection, you deserve her not; I affirm she is secondary to no woman."

"I see

"I see in the heiress of Kintail the beloved of my soul," replied sir James, "and would willingly devote my life to her service; but in my royal mistress I contemplate a goddess, whom at a distance I revere and adore."

"Well then, sir knight, my gage against yours; nor goddesses, nor queens, direct my sword; neither do I acknowledge the charms of any of our Danish virgins; no, nor even those of the heiress of Kintail, but of Ambrosine, the Highland maid, with an angel's form and a hero's spirit: therefore look to your seat, for if I unhorse you not in three turns, the disgrace be mine."

"Sooner said than done," replied sir James, "though you challenge me unfairly, using the name of her I love—but have with you, sir knight." So saying, they spurred their coursers, and attacked each other with a fury increased by pride and emulation; but the

skill of the knight of Lorn was not to be put in competition with the strength, activity, and knowledge of Monteith, who, true to his word, in the third turn unhorsed his adversary.

"Did not I tell you," said Monteith, ironically, but still maintaining his foreign accent, "that queens and goddesses must yield to the Highland maid? Are ye for another encounter, or have ye enough?"

"Not so," replied sir James; "to my last breath I will maintain the charms of the Scottish queen unrivalled." So saying, he drew his sword, but only to experience fresh disgrace, for in spite of his utmost efforts, he was disarmed with such violence, that the king commanded him, on his favour, not to hazard a third encounter.

No cries of triumph, nor any sound of satisfaction, marked Monteith's victory; for the Scottish nobles, discomfited

fited at the disgrace of the queen's knight by a stranger, swore to avenge him; while Monteith, alone in the ring, his visor still down, thus addressed them:—

"Nobles and knights! a stranger among ye, I have no wish to carry off unearned the palm of victory. I am not yet breathed; Ambrosine still hangs upon my sword; let me not earn honour so easily."

"We mean it not," said the knight of Traquair, riding forward; "we all allow the beauty of the fair heiress, but the queen of Scotland yields to none."

"That time will shew," replied Monteith: "Come on: the charms of Ambrosine, though known but yesterday, might sinew a weaker arm than mine."

A giant strength appeared to animate the graceful but manly body of Monteith, for in a few minutes he gave his opponent such a severe fall, that he de-

 clined

clined all farther contest; nor were three that afterwards replaced him more fortunate, for they experienced an equal disgrace.

"Now have with thee, though thou wert the devil," cried a knight, riding forward, whom Monteith knew instantly for the lord Roskelyn. "Hitherto thou hast borne it bravely—the queen of Scotland nerves my arm, as thou sayest of Ambrosine; therefore beware, thou foreign boaster!"

The heart of St. Clair beat high, but, preserving his feigned accent and manner, he said—"Alas, poor queen! I would she had a better champion. But, sir knight, remember you are now perhaps to exhibit your prowess before the chosen of your heart; if so, let her see that you are not only able to love, but, if occasion need, to protect her."

The person of Roskelyn was strongly formed and active, yet he was not equal

to

to enter the lists against Monteith; for though he for some time appeared to support the conflict with great skill, he at length shared the fate of those that preceded him, being unhorsed with such violence that he was unable to renew the contest.

"If it be thus in jest," said St. Clair, "we should be unequal opponents in a serious contest. I grieve that you have not more bodily strength, as some day you may find occasion for it."

No other champion presenting for the queen, the sports were adjourned until the morrow; Monteith first taking the weapons of the vanquished, and laying them at the feet of Ambrosine.

"Sir knight," said she, "I can scarcely return you thanks for a compliment that will make me many foes. You are apparently strong, skilful, and experienced in warlike encounters, and will doubtless find divers occasions to

distinguish yourself against your enemies; but even in that case, I pray ye, remember mercy as the most glorious quality in a conqueror, and Ambrosine will always recollect the undeserved honour you have paid her with gratitude."

"Lady," answered Monteith, still in a feigned accent, "while I remember Ambrosine, I must remember mercy—and who that has once seen so fair a maid can forget her; a maid who, to the perfection of beauty, adds the higher qualities of the mind; who, unbiassed by rank, power, or wealth, *seeks out the oppressed*, and soothes them with the soft language of consolation?"

"You rate me above my deserts," answered she, blushing; "but I thank you. Prosperous gales waft ye safe to the Danish shore, where some fair maid, I trust, will pay the debt of Ambrosine."

'I seek

"I seek no return, lady—I *dare* not love; but if ever Ambrosine should need a knight, remember she hath one who is ready to sacrifice his life in her service." So saying, St. Clair remounted his courser, and with his friends left the field of sports.

On the ensuing morning, Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, were the first that entered the lists, proclaiming by the herald the merit and beauty of Ambrosine, declaring themselves her knights, and defying all who refused to acknowledge her claim; none, however, were found to oppose them, for the defeats of the second day had damped all valour, and made the whole assembly resolve not to encounter the strange knight, or his companions, who they doubted not were as dangerous as himself.

"Fair one," said the king, "your knights multiply—in case of danger, methinks

thinks your name might raise me an army."

"A number of champions, my liege, are no boast to a simple maid like me," replied Ambrosine; "one true knight is all my heart hath a right to expect."

"And why will you not see that favoured knight in sir James Stuart?" said the king.

"Because my heart refuses to acknowledge him," said she. "I have always found it a faithful counsellor, and like not to act against its dictates."

"Beware, lest it at length deceive you. You have bold and powerful champions in these Danes—know ye them?"

"I am personally acquainted with no Dane, my liege."

The sports of the day, as all declined encountering the strange knights, were few, so that all returned at an early

hour

hour to the feasting provided, and which was to close the entertainment.

St. Clair and his companions immediately left Perth, and took the way to Edinburgh, in order to execute a plan which they had formed; and reposing themselves in a cottage by the way, on the following morning they pursued their journey.

In the environs of Edinburgh dwelt Carnegie, on a small estate, which had been a part of the patrimony of St. Clair, and which, in the division of his right, had been given for the residence of the acting agent of the unjust decree.

Thither the outlaws, at the close of day, directed their steps, and demanding entrance at the gate, were speedily admitted by the domestics, who had no idea of other intruders, than some of

the

the noble knights who were returning from the tournament, and who might have business with their master.

The pretended esquires were left at the gate; but Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, were ushered into the hall, where Carnegie, nothing doubting they were visitors, from whom either his pride, avarice, or perhaps both, might be gratified, rose to receive them, with all the sycophant humility he was accustomed to use to those he considered as his superiors.

"Noble knights," said he, "you honour my dwelling; I pray ye be seated, remove your helmets, and take such refreshment as my house affords."

The knights bowed, but remained silent.

"Ye went out sportively inclined, and returned the same," said Carnegie. "Ye will however take refreshment, when ye may perhaps please to disclose yourselves;

yourselves; for wine, it is said, gladdeneth the soul, and openeth the heart of man."

The knights laughed, but made no reply; while Carnegie called to his men, who, to the number of four, entered with wine and food.

De Bourg, who was unknown to Carnegie, than raised his visor, and taking a bumper of wine, said—"Carnegie, I'll give thee a health; nay, fill thy goblet to the brim, for, by my soul! I will stick my dagger in the man's heart that refuses it."

Carnegie looked somewhat alarmed, but concluding the whole a jest, did as he was commanded.

"St. Clair Monteith, then," said De Bourg, "and confusion to his enemies!"

Carnegie started, and dropped the cup, while his domestics, no less alarmed, attempted to advance towards the door. —"Stir

—"Stir not for your lives," said Ross, opposing their passage; "if ye remain quiet, ye are safe, but death attends resistance; remain in your places, and hear all in silence."

Their enemies were too formidable to be resisted; the men therefore resumed their station at the lower end of the hall.

"Nay, the pledge, the pledge," cried De Bourg, filling another cup, and presenting it to Carnegie, "Marry, should it choke thee, it may save thee from a more unworthy end."

Trembling, in every limb, Carnegie drank the pledge, and then remained silent.

"Carnegie," continued De Bourg, "thou art a wise fellow, and one of thy sayings I will treasure in my memory, '*Wine gladdeneth the soul, and openeth the heart of man.*' Now, to open thy heart is my immediate business. Hark thee,

Carnegie,

Carnegie, thou hast considerable arrears of St. Clair's in thy hands—these must away with me to Barra, or, by my father's soul! thou thyself shalt go in their stead."

Carnegie turned pale. "Indeed, sir knight," said he, "you treat me harshly—'tis by the king's own order I receive the revenues of the chief St. Clair for the lord of Roskelyn."

"What right has the king to seize on what is not his own?" replied De Bourg. "Mark, Carnegie, I speak no treason; but if any other man had done this, he would have been a knave. For the lord of Roskelyn, he is an arrant varlet; and for thee, thou art—nay, never tremble or look pale—thou art safe man, if thou dost well: but we have tarried long enough; come, give me the money, or prepare to accompany us; we have men at the gate, and a yet

stronger

stronger reinforcement at a short distance."

"Patience, good sir—patience, and hear me. Not more than six months since, I accounted with the lord of Roskelyn, and at this time have not more than two hundred and fifty marks of the chief Monteith's in my hands; should I pay that to strangers, which ye are to me, it might be thought I invented a story to appropriate the money to my own use."

"Had ye then Monteith's order, ye would be safe from blame," said De Bourg.

"Not so; it could only testify that I paid it perforce."

"And that, those fellows can witness for thee," said De Bourg.

"'Tis not sufficient to insure him belief," said St. Clair, lifting up his helmet. "Behold, I am here, thou poor knave,

knave, and now what subterfuge hast thou?"

Carnegie trembled universally. "I will fetch what money I have," said he; "so please you to write me a discharge."

"I will accompany thee," said De-Bourg. "By Heaven, I will not lose sight of thee."

So saying, he accompanied Carnegie into an inner apartment, where, unlocking a strong chest, he shewed De Bourg several bags, each of which was marked with the name of the different estate whose revenue it contained. Four of these appertained to St. Clair, and which, with a heavy sigh, Carnegie delivered to De Bourg, who peremptorily demanded if there was no more?

"No, by the Virgin and blessed angels!" replied Carnegie; "there is the whole now in my hands."

"Pish, man!" replied De Bourg, "what

"what are virgins to thee? and for angels, unless they are golden ones, thou heedest them as little."

"What then shall I swear by? said Carnegie.

"Faith, by nothing; varlet that thou art, I would not damn thee; thou mayest yet live to make a monk, and by enriching some monastery with thy ill-gotten wealth, die surrounded with bald pates singing requiems to thy departing spirit; but look to it, for thy soul once beyond the holy walls, the devil will have a hard struggle for his own." So saying, followed by Carnegie, he joined St. Clair and Ross in the hall.

"Bring me ink, and I will write a discharge for the sum I receive," said St. Clair. "But mark me well, and tell the same to Roskelyn, that the next time ye give me this trouble, ye get not off so easily. For James of Scotland,

land, if he wishes to chastise me, I am to be found at Barra."

St. Clair then wrote the acquittal, and striking Carnegie on the back with the flat of his sword, he said—"Remember this lesson, and profit by it. Farewell." With these words they left the dwelling without opposition, and joining their friends, travelled during the night with the utmost speed, in the morning concluding themselves safe from pursuit.

Carnegie was too much alarmed and panic-struck to leave his dwelling until the ensuing morning, when, somewhat re-assured by finding all quiet about his environs, he ventured to mount his horse, and, attended by his four domestics, hastened to the castle of Roskelyn.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.



On reaching Roskelyn, Carnegie found the lord of the domain had arrived late the evening before, and being admitted into the hall, found him seated with the countess his wife, the dowager his mother, and the heiress of Kintail.

Carnegie's looks were indicative that all was not well; and lord Roskelyn addressing him, immediately asked the cause. To his great astonishment, he learned what had passed with the outlaws, and from the description, had no doubt but the Danish strangers were the same. The disgrace of his defeat in the justing, the contemptuous manner of his opponent, his boldness in demand-

ing

ing his own, all conspired to awaken the fears, and to wound the pride of Roskelyn, who, with the most deadly imprecations, vowed revenge.

The dowager said little, but appeared confused and grieved, while the young countess, with a glance of contempt at her lord, only wished that Heaven had made her a man, in which case she would neither have suffered personal disgrace nor have been outwitted by St. Clair Monteith.

Such was the effect that Carnegie's account had upon three of the party, while on the fourth, Ambrosine, it had a contrary effect, exciting only her mirth, and causing her to laugh so heartily, as to draw upon her the rebukes of the whole family.

"Out upon you, rude girl!" said the dowager. "You said truly that you were mountain-born and bred, but why

an affair, so replete with vexation to us, should be a cause of mirth to you, I cannot comprehend."

"I pray you pardon me," replied Ambrosine; "women, you know, are naturally pleased with brave men, and that such a one as St. Clair should succeed, delights me."

"Delights you!" repeated the dowager; "this is surely too much to avow in the presence of the injured party."

"Heaven forefend that I should increase the vexation of any person that was injured!" answered Ambrosine. "Lord Roskelyn comes not under that description."

"Wonder not at Ambrosine!" said the countess, spitefully. "Have you forgotten the attention the villain paid her at the tournament? To a young maid, unaccustomed to the attentions of men, carrying away the claim of beauty,

was

was so flattering a compliment, that I should not be surprised to see her throw herself into the arms of her champion."

"And should they open to receive me," answered Ambrosine, "I should be an object of universal envy. The proud dames of the fertile south, stretched on silken beds by their listless lords, would envy the wife of Monteith, amidst the barren rocks of Barra, defended by the arms of a hero."

"Think you so?" replied the countess scornfully; "how comes it then that he hath not wedded?—the world says he has already loved."

"I have heard so, but I believe it not. Boys and girls form strange fancies, and call it love; but when reason and age give maturity to their knowledge, such trifles are no longer thought of, or at least only remembered with disgust."

"St. Clair's passion was said not to

 be

be of that light nature," replied the countess, with visible pique.

"At least then," answered Ambrosine, "he bears diappointment well. On a hero like Monteith, a slight passion, or a love unjustly treated, would make no impression beyond the passing hour; but one deserving his heart, and worthily returned, would take a root never to be effaced but with life itself."

"On my word," said the dowager, "had you ever seen Monteith before the tournament, when I am convinced you saw not his face, I should say you were preposterous enough to love him."

"I never shall love a man for his face; I could as well love a statue or a picture. Even from my infancy I have been charmed with valiant actions; and when our minstrels were accustomed to sing of noble deeds, my heart used to swell almost too large for my bosom."

"I will

"I will away to Edinburgh," said lord Roskelyn; "the king is returned thither—he will not suffer his commands to be broken with impunity." So saying, he called for his retinue, and taking horse, lost no time in hastening to the city. He found the king assembled in council with his nobles, and immediately preferred his complaint, which was heard with a mixture of wonder and anger: the first, at the boldness of the outlaws; the second, at the little heed they paid to the sentence passed against them.

"Call together," said the king, "a competent force, and hasten to bring those traitors before me; we will shew them we are not to be insulted with impunity."

Sir Alexander Livingstone, though no friend to Monteith, was too good a politician not to see the danger and difficulty of such an enterprise. "My

liege," said he, "what force, think you, will be necessary on this occasion?"

"Nay, I know not; send fifty, nay, an hundred men, if it be necessary, to seize the varlets."

"With submission, my liege, on such an errand, I would not command a body of a thousand, to be master of the crown of Scotland. Accustomed to the islands, and to the northern coast, from his infancy, St. Clair is acquainted with every stronghold and fastness of the country beyond most other men. From being partly bred among the inhabitants, and now again having resided among them for a considerable time, during which he hath carefully cultivated their friendship, they would fight or die in his defence, and on the appearance of danger, his banner once displayed, would flock to it by thousands; and, glad of a pretence to plunder, cross over to our coasts, and, like swarms of

locusts,

locusts, spread devastation and ruin around them."

"Though there may be some truth in this," replied the king, "would you that the traitors should act with impunity?"

"My liege," replied Livingstone, "I could wish that St. Clair Monteith had never been exiled to Barra, from whence I consider he never now can be forced, but by a waste of blood and treasure too great to be expended on so insignificant a subject. Hitherto, himself and his companions have been quiet, except in this instance, which, with submission, I think had better be disregarded, unless they could have been seized when here. Their appearance at the tournament should also, I think, be considered as only the mere warmth of youth; and doubtless a want of money instigated St. Clair's visit to the agent, where he

considered the sum, though extracted by force, as only a just appropriation of his own property."

Livingstone paused, but the king making no reply, he continued—"Strong and ferocious as wolves, the islanders are good friends, but dreadful enemies; and though, if an insurrection should happen, there is no doubt they would be subdued, yet the toil would be great, and the expence heavy; and whether it be worth while to incur it in this case, I leave to your grace's better judgment."

"There is great truth and reason in what thou sayest, Livingstone," replied the king; "but thou dost not consider my contemned authority, and the wounded feelings of Roskelyn."

"I do, my liege, and think, as I said before, that could Monteith have been taken when here, his life would

have been a necessary sacrifice to insure future tranquillity; but as the business now stands, I hold my first opinion."

On a further consultation, the advice of Livingstone was adopted, at least until such time as means could be devised to get him into their hands.

In the mean time, safe from danger, and laughing at what had past, Monteith, Ross, De Bourg, and their companions, reached the coast, and speedily sailed to Barra, where they were warmly received by their friends, who had not been free from alarm during their absence. What also gave the whole party pleasure, was the revived spirits of St Clair, who appeared to have thrown off the heavy gloom that hung over him before his departure. The little Randolph clung about his neck, and by a thousand kisses welcomed his

 return,

return, while St. Clair pressed him in his arms, saying—"Boy, either thy face and manners partake of the deepest hypocrisy, or thou wilt neither resemble father nor mother."

The discovery of the youth Ambrose, in the person of the heiress of Kintail, astonished all, though all attributed the visit she had made them to one cause, the love of St. Clair; but no one could conjecture how, or at what period, that affection had taken place.

St. Clair, however he treated the idea with ridicule, felt his heart flattered by it, and insensibly Ambrosine mingled in his thoughts, until he began to conjecture, that had his first love been placed upon so worthy an object, it had not been so ungratefully returned.

About a month after their return, St. Clair signified an inclination to go to the isle of Sky, in which excursion he was accompanied by De Bourg and

M'Gregor.

M'Gregor. After passing some time there, they crossed the narrow frith to Kintail, where, in the ordinary guise of travellers, they visited the castle of the heiress. Making such common questions as might give no suspicion, they learned that the fair mistress was almost idolized among her vassals; that by the will of her mother, she was left, for the years of her minority, in the charge of the dowager of Roskelyn, with whom they expected her soon to visit her paternal dwelling.

"Is it long since you saw your mistress?" said St. Clair, carelessly addressing the domestic.

"Not more than six months," replied he; "but her stay was short—the lady Roskelyn was impatient to return to the south, and even left the lady Ambrosine for the last month; but she joined her at Inverness."

"The identical time," said St. Clair,

in a low voice, to De Bourg; then addressing the man, he added—"You expect her speedily to return—said you not so?"

"Daily; several arrangements specified in the lady Kintail's testament remain to be fulfilled, and she must come to execute them."

Having satisfied their curiosity they retired; and after some conversation, it was resolved they should again visit Kintail before they returned to Barra, but in the mean time to tarry in the isle of Sky, to baffle suspicion.

By passengers that were perpetually crossing the frith, they, in about ten days, learned that the heiress of Kintail was arrived at her castle, and that, by the orders of lady Roskelyn, great preparations were making to entertain a gallant company, which entertainment,

some

some whispered, would terminate by the marriage of the heiress.

"If her heart is willing," said St. Clair, "happy may she be! but, by my soul, if otherwise, not lady Roskelyn, nor all her fiends to back her, shall force the sweet maid."

De Bourg burst into a fit of laughter. "*Give me tigers, fiends, serpents, devils—any thing but women!*" exclaimed he. "Oh, how I like to see a fellow brought to his senses!"

"To lose them rather," replied Monteith. Laugh, De Bourg—I give thee free license—thou art welcome—I deserve it all; but say, canst thou allow nothing for repentance?—nay, to gratify thee at once, man, were I master of my fortune, I would lay it at the feet of Ambrosine; but as it is, I decline all but friendship for her.

"Commend me to the friendship of a fellow of twenty-seven, like thee, and a

girl,

girl of nineteen, like Ambrosine!" cried De Bourg. "By Heaven! if thou carriest not off this heiress, I will proclaim thee a poltroon."

"Then thou undoubtedly wilt do so," replied Monteith; "could I give her happiness, my heart and hand would be ready; but to overwhelm her with my disgrace and poverty, is both against my honour and inclination."

CHAP.

CHAPTER X.



The information which the outlaws had received of the heiress being arrived at her castle of Kintail was true, and many visitors of the highest rank were expected to join them in a short time. Splendour and shew were ever the highest gratifications to the dowager of Roskelyn, and the loss of the young Montrose, her grandson, appeared by no means to have deadened these inclinations, for in dissipation she endeavoured to dispel not only that, but also some other very unpleasant recollections. 'Tis true, no means of inquiry were spared to discover the youthful heir; but

but a year having nearly elapsed, it began to be conjectured that his death had prevented the robbers from claiming the ransom.

Ambrosine, when she could gratify the dowager without injuring her own feelings and happiness, readily coincided in her love of pleasure, not that she was pleased with the bustle and pageantry of greatness, but willingly paid the compliment to one her mother had constituted her guardian.

Some evenings after their arrival, one of the vassals entering the hall where the dowager and Ambrosine were seated at supper, informed them that three minstrels requested to be admitted. "They are old men," added he, "and have in their youth served in the wars, for two are lame, and the third is disfigured by the loss of an eye. But truly they play rarely; one on the small

pipes,

pipes, another on the harp, and the third, with the blind eye, sings better than any minstrel I ever heard."

"So much for their merits," said Ambrosine; "I pray ye give them meat, and, with the lady Roskelyn's leave, admit them. My heart is heavy, and music will banish thought."

"And why should your heart be heavy?" said the dowager. "Youth, wealth, and beauty are yours, and one of the first knights in Scotland is willing to devote his life to you."

"If he is inclined to continue his folly, I cannot at present prevent it; but were it only for the persecution, I should hate him."

At that moment the lacky entered with the minstrels; they appeared, as he said, to have been sorely wounded, for two walked with difficulty, and the third wore an enormous patch, to conceal the loss of an eye. They were however

however clean and respectfully clad, and their white hairs and beards demanded respect and compassion.

The dowager of Roskelyn was too haughty to exchange words with creatures she regarded so far beneath her; but Ambrosine's heart, at once unassuming and gentle, struck with their appearance, thus addressed them—"Good fellows, ye are old to follow this wandering trade; your country, in cases such as yours, ought to furnish a secure asylum, for ye have seen hard service."

"Truly, lady, have we," said the one-eyed minstrel; "we fought in the wars of Robert Stuart, under the banner of the brave Archibald Douglas, and that of his son William. We were at the bloody field of Otterburn, and saw Henry and Ralph Percy taken prisoners—but woe's the day! covered with wounds, we also saw the valiant earl of Douglas

Douglas fall. We afterwards fought in the service of Robert III. and were going, under the banner of William Douglas, against the enemies of the cross, when our gallant leader was treacherously slain on the bridge at Danskin by the dastard arts of the lord Clifford."

"Poor fellows! give them," said she to the lackey, "each a bumper of wine —it will comfort their age and renovate their spirits."

The lackey did as he was commanded, and the musicians beginning to play, the blind minstrel sung the Coronation of Robert Bruce, by the lady Buchan, the battle of Bannockburn, and various others, all of which his companions, accompanied with their instruments, until at length he paused, and asked what he should sing next?

"Lady Roskelyn will choose," said Ambrosine; "you have a goodly collection,

lection, and shall stay awhile at the castle."

"Nay," replied the dowager, "I care not what—name some."

"Will you, lady," said the minstrel, "Hardicanute, the Lady Barbary, the Danish Defeat, or—"

"These are all old," said the dowager, interrupting him; "know ye nothing knew? know ye none of the court songs!"

"None, lady; they suit not my voice; but we have an Erse song that pleaseth well; it is called *the Banished Man and the Angel*—shall I sing that?"

"If you will—but I hate the language, and do not comprehend it altogether; therefore give us first the argument."

"Willingly, lady. In the reign of one of our Scottish kings (I know not which), some men, unjustly treated, were banished to an island on the west-

ern

ern coast, and left a prey to the most poignant vexation. The song consists of an account of how they were visited by an angel, who not only came to relieve their wants, but left an impression of gratitude on their hearts never to be erased."

Ambrosine started at the beginning of the argument, but at the near conclusion interrupted the minstrel, and, with her cheeks dyed with blushes, said—"I pray you sing not that—I know it well—there is something in it respecting a damsel who forgot the decorum of her sex—I like it not."

"You mistake, lady; in the conduct of the maid there was nothing at which the chastity of a sainted virgin need blush; and——"

"Out upon the filthy fellow!" interrupted the dowager; "would he shock our ears with his unchaste ditties!"

"Not so; the purest maid of Scotland

land was not more praise-worthy than the damsel—but the young lady mistakes the song for some other."

"No, not so," replied Ambrosine; "to prove that I know it, did not the banished man want to bribe the angel, and to make her tipsy?'

"No, on my life, lady' replied the minstrel, scarce refraining from laughter; "they knew her not at the time; but, once discovered, they worshipped her."

"Oh! I can tell you every word," answered Ambrosine. "Say what you please, they wanted to bribe her with a chain of gold; and there was one impudent fellow, with great eyes, who frightened her away at day-break. Was it not so?"

"Something like it, I believe, lady," answered the minstrel, glancing at one of his companions: "but, were all to be judged by him?"

"Nay, I know not. Can you sing

Alexander,

Alexander, or Duncan, or the Seer of Sky, or, in short, any thing you please, except the Banished Man and the Angel?"

"Ay, ay, so as it be proper for us to hear," said the lady Roskelyn.

The minstrel then sung the valorous acts of Alexander I. surnamed the Fierce, in so strong and lofty a strain, that it might have inspired the coldest heart with courage; then, changing his note to plaintive harmony, he sung the death of the beauteous Maud, wife of David I. and the lamentation of her husband, who for her sake forswore all women. These were in so soft and touching a strain, that Ambrosine's bosom swelled, and tears streamed from her eyes, for those whose bodies had been three hundred years mingled with the dust. Even the dowager was charmed with the harmony, and turning to Ambrosine, she said—"We will retain

these

these minstrels—they will furnish amüsement for our noble guests."

Ambrosine made no reply, but remained with her eyes cast down, and averted from the musicians.

The minstrels received the lady Roskelyn's order to stay with thanks, and having been supplied by the vassals with food, retired to an apartment allotted them.

In the mean time, Ambrosine was overwhelmed with confusion, for on a near examination she had recognised in the minstrels three of the outlaws, and particularly in the singer, the chief Monteith—a discovery which would have escaped her, they were so carefully disguised, had not he himself made the avowal, by alluding to what had passed at Barra. How to conduct herself respecting them she knew not; to betray them to the dowager was an act she would sooner have yielded her life than

have

have been guilty of; yet to connive at their stay in the castle was contrary to the maidenly modesty that reigned in her bosom. That she loved Monteith beyond all men, was most true; and at the close of the tournament, when he addressed her, she recognised him in the Danish knight, and was most happy when she learned by Carnegie of his departure.

Though she ardently wished to speak to Monteith, yet the construction she was convinced must be put on her visit to Barra filled her with confusion; yet, determined not to consent to their stay in the castle, she resolved to overcome it, and at once to satisfy the decorum of her sex, by commanding his absence, and to satisfy her fears for his safety by causing him to ret[illegible]n to the fortress.

CHAPTER XI.



AMBROSINE, accustomed to a country life, rose early; while the dowager, following the manners of the court, slept late. The former, therefore, resolving to take advantage of the opportunity that occurred, ordered the minstrels to be called to play during her breakfast, dismissing the other attendants. On finding her commands obeyed, and herself alone with the musicians, her confusion for some moments was so great as to deny her utterance, until Monteith, stepping forward, said—" Pardon, fair Ambrosine, a deception of which gratitude is alone the cause. With hearts warm with love and friendship for our

benefactor

benefactor Ambrose, what was our rapture to recognise him in the heiress of Kintail! To express our thanks in so public an assembly, was impossible, which induced us to practise the subterfuge we have now made use of. I return, sweet maid, the dross which gained value by your gift"—so saying, he laid a bag at her feet—" but the obligation is written upon my heart in characters never to be effaced."

Ambrosine somewhat collected herself during the time that Monteith spoke, and with dignified modesty replied—" I am convinced my conduct must appear extraordinary, and needs interpretation; but the secret is with men of honour, and consequently safe. "My father," continued she, " first interested me for St. Clair Monteith; he spoke of him as the victim of the pride and vice of his mother, and a monument

of the disgraceful weakness of his father; as the pride of his uncle's age, and, but for some youthful imprudences, an honour to his name and country. Misfortunes and valour are interesting to woman. I wished to see Monteith, but no opportunity happened, until about two years since, when, after my father's death, I accompanied my mother to Lewis. There again Monteith was recalled to my memory, by repeated accounts which I heard of the benevolence himself and companions had shewn to the inhabitants of the different isles during the preceding winter, which had been uncommonly severe. After this, one morning sailing to Bernera with a youthful party on a pleasurable excursion, one of my companions fixed my attention by pointing out the chief himself, who, with several of his friends, was also just landing on the coast. They passed us with the common salutation

of

of touching their caps, and I saw them no more till I saw them at Barra."

"I remember it well," said St. Clair; "but, blind infidel that I was, I noticed no particular object. Ambrosine, once seen, is not formed to be overlooked."

"You have not forgotten to compliment," said she; "but excuse me—I wish to take advantage of this opportunity to, in some measure, exculpate my own conduct, and also to satisfy the curiosity which I am convinced you must have on the subject."

Monteith and his companions bowed, and remained silent.

"Soon after our return to Kintail, I lost my mother. Distantly allied by blood, but nearer by the friendship of their early days, she left to the dowager of Roskelyn the care of my minority; and, the last duties performed, I was for the first time conducted to the south of Scotland.

"When I became an inmate of the castle of Roskelyn, Monteith there was a constant theme, and, had I not before formed a decided opinion of him, I should from account have considered him a monster. During my stay there, the dowager visited her castle of Ensdale, and took with her the young heir of Roskelyn, in order to shew him to his future vassals. On her return, they were beset near the borders by English robbers, who seized the infant, who doubtless died, for ransome hath never been claimed for him.

"A considerable time previous to this event, Monteith had sent an order for sixty marks on his estate; it was refused with insult; and hearing the account, I racked my imagination how to do an act which I know my honoured father, had he lived, would not have disapproved. I refer to advancing the sum in a manner to insure its being received.

ceived. I neither loved the dowager nor the countess of Roskelyn; and for the earl, at once the tool of his aspiring mother, and the slave of his arrogant wife, I felt a sentiment to which I can give no other name than contempt. The loss of the young Montrose, for some time sat heavily on the dowager and the earl; but though I could not refuse them commiseration, I felt their punishment just. For the young countess, possessed of no affection beyond that for herself, she awakened all the dislike my heart was capable of feeling, by the unconcern she shewed on the occasion. Indeed I ever thought she loved not the unfortunate infant; her complexion, and also that of the earl, is fair, and their eyes blue; that of the young Montrose was a clear brown, and his eyes black; hence she was accustomed to call him a true Monteith, or any name to the same allusion which she

considered as contemptuous; while in reality he was a boy that the proudest mother might have clasped to her bosom with transport, and, to have judged from infancy, have gloried in the reflection of what he promised to be when time should have stamped him man."

As the refreshing showers of heaven fall upon parched land, so did the words of Ambrosine on the heart of Monteith, who viewed her with a sentiment of respect and admiration that he had never before experienced.

"My story beguiles me," said she, "and I stray from my subject. The earl's refusal to pay the demand of sixty marks, as I heard it accurately related, filled me with anger and contempt; and some time after, feigning a dislike to some jewels I wore, I persuaded the countess to exchange with me for those I brought to Barra, and which, I had accidentally heard from an old domestic,

were

were originally yours.—You are now masters of the whole secret, except the means I used to visit the fortress.

"The countess dowager, at my request, accompanied me to Kintail; but after a few days stay, finding it, as she said gloomy, she visited her friends in the vicinity of Inverness. During her absence I executed my project, by engaging a small vessel which appertains to my nurse's husband, which conveyed me safely to you, and afterwards home. Such is my story: I confess I stepped over the boundaries prescribed my sex; but the motive excuses me to myself, and I trust will also to you.

"As sinners think of blessed spirits who leave their heavenly abode to administer peace and consolation to sinking souls, so doth Monteith consider Ambrosine. Oh maid, most honoured! I have no words to express my gratitude and veneration. The slave of folly, the

 dupe

dupe of a face without a heart, to have been an object of attention to such a mind as thine, I blush for myself; but, gaining consequence by the distinction, will endeavour to deserve it."

"To pretend a disregard to the safety of Monteith, whom I shall ever be happy to rank among my friends, would be a pretension to female refinement which I do not possess. He is not safe at Kintail, and, if he will listen to the voice of reason, will immediately return to the fortress of Barra. Nay, chief, at the word *safety*, you look as if you scorned it; I must therefore use another incentive. 'Tis against the honour of a maid like me, to connive at young men being in the castle disguised. The punctilious refinements of my sex I do not comprehend, but the road to honour is plain, and never willingly shall Ambrosine deviate from its paths."

"Painful as these commands may be, they

they shall be obeyed," said Monteith; "for the honour of Ambrosine is dearer than the blood that warms my heart."

"I thank you," replied she; "we shall meet again; but gratify me, I pray you, by taking back the money; I need it not, and a time will come for payment."

"Dearest maid, you forget that in my journey to the south, I robbed myself in the person of Carnegie, and am yet so well supplied, that you must pardon me for declining your kindness. For the jewels I must still remain your debtor."

"To contend with you on the subject will, I see, be useless? but remember, I pray you, sirs, that you have all a friend, should occasion need; and now, however unwilling, I must bid you farewell."

Monteith gazed on her in silence,

but De Bourg, throwing himself at her feet, said—"Lady, you have honoured us by calling us your friends; surely you have not less kindness for that name than for the blind and lame minstrels whom you condescended to invite for a while to remain at the castle."

"The chevalier De Bourg, if I recollect right," said Ambrosine, smiling.

De Bourg bowed.

"Indeed, chevalier," continued she, "were you both blind and lame, I know not whether I should suffer your stay; as it is, it is impossible—nay, I owe you a return; for I protest you drove me from the fortress some hours before I intended, and now I do but the same by you."

"A plague on the impudence of my eyes!" replied he; for that offence, if I do not put them under such discipline, that those of the most demure monk in Scotland

Scotland shall not outdo them; they shall never more dare glance at beauty, except in an oblique direction."

"I dare not ask," said Monteith, "even the respite of a few hours; yet our disguise baffles detection, and I wish to ask of Ambrosine a question of some moment."

"Ask it now.—Nay, you hesitate," added she, after a short pause; "of what nature can it be, not to be discussed before friends so sincere as those before us?"

"My question, lady, concerns only your own happiness; Monteith will never forget he is a banished man."

The animated face of Ambrosine suddenly became serious. "That reproach was unmerited," said she; "but stay, if you so please, until to-morrow morn, and then Heaven send you fair winds and a safe return to Barra! I grieve to receive you in a manner so little worthy of you, but

but necessity must plead my excuse." So saying, she held her hand alternately to each of the outlaws, and then, with a step as light as that fabled of sylph or fairy, left the hall.

"By my soul," said M'Gregor, "I will never marry! the graces of all the women I ever saw, collected, would not equal the beauties of this maid."

"True," replied De Bourg: "how have we heard the beauties of Ellen chanted forth, and what fools have we all been for that jilt, who, compared to this maid, is no more than one of nature's every-day productions, while she is a masterpiece of all that is beautiful and excellent."

"By my life, but ye are both in love!" said Monteith! "and, in good faith, if ye need another fool to the number, add St. Clair. Oh, Ellen! Ellen! never till this day did I feel the extent of my obligation to thee."

The

"The devil you did not!" replied M'Gregor. "I understand not that."

"No!" answered Monteith: "did she not surfeit me with ingratitude, folly, and falsehood, leaving me a heart free for an affection which, though I will never indulge, must be the pride and glory of my life?"

During the rest of the day, the minstrels were so diligent in the duties of their profession, that they appeared never to have followed any other, and so far gained the goodwill of the dowager, that she repeated her commands for their remaining at the castle. After supper, Ambrosine approaching them, as if to order some particular song, said in a low voice to Monteith—"If you have any thing to communicate to me, I shall be in the south gallery when the bell tolls the hour of midnight."

The evening concluded, and the dowager and the vassals retired to rest: Monteith

Monteith hastened to the appointment, where, after waiting near half an hour, he was joined by Ambrosine, who brought with her a lighted taper. "For this condescension much thanks," said he; "what I have to say will not long detain you, and I should have departed heavily, had I not been permitted to ask a question, which, though our new acquaintance may not authorise, your candour will, I trust, excuse."

"In meeting you thus," replied she, "I feel I act improperly as a young unprotected maid, whose actions, as well as her mind, should be free from reproach; but I know my own heart, and trust in the integrity of yours. Speak freely, therefore, all you wish to-night, and cross the frith at early dawn, be it only to free me from the anxiety I experience while you are here."

"Your wishes are commands, dearest maid: my life, heretofore of no value, will

will gain estimation in my own eyes, by the consideration that you are interested for me."

"Every hour," said she, "may bring the expected guests, in which case I could not support the dread of a discovery; and though I have no doubt your friends and the islanders would use every means in their power, yet they could neither secure you from treachery, which, if all other means should fail, would be had recourse to, nor me from the disgrace of having been disguised in the castle."

Monteith, almost unknown to himself, had taken the hand of Ambrosine. "Pardon me," said he, "but who are your expected guests?"

"The lord and lady Roskelyn, and the whole of their courtly friends. They mean to pass a month here."

"Comes the knight of Lorn with them?"

"I know

"I know not, but I expect so; he is the dowager's shadow."

"The dowager is not his magnet, fair Ambrosine! May I take the liberty of a friend, and ask you, if you can love him?"

"I love him not; his perseverance is useless; he comes on a fruitless errand, and will return disappointed."

"The dowager has caused a report to be spread among your vassals, that you came here to be wedded."

"She will then have the trouble to tell them that the marriage is postponed till I am in the humour; I know her well, but am neither to be frightened nor soothed into compliance. Know ye of the attack the queen gave into on the first day of the tournament?"

"It was then I first recognised you, or rather the chevalier, for I felt inclined to disbelieve the evidence of my senses."

"I wonder not at it. It was a busi-

ness

ness arranged among them to take me by surprise in so public an assembly, but the scheme failed. The queen is partial to the knight of Lorn, and wishes to enrich him at my expence. The dowager too has motives, the one to bring wealth into her family, as the knight is her relation, the other to ingratiate herself with the queen, who pays her distinguished attention."

"My question is answered; from what I heard at the tournament, I judged Sir James Stuart was not in possession of your heart. The dowager is designing and deep in policy where she wishes to gain her end; and, pardon me, the gentle Ambrosine will be no match for her arts."

"She dares not use them; but even should she, I am here surrounded by the vassals of my father's house, whom, if occasion needed, I would call together, and let her see that whatever I may be

in

in the castle of Roskelyn, I am mistress here."

"Nobly resolved! But say, sweet maid, in such a case, whose arm would be nerved so strongly as that of Monteith? Methinks the name of Ambrosine gives me a giant strength; and must I leave you undefended to persecution and insult?"

Ambrosine made no reply, and Monteith continued—

"Dearest Ambrosine, friend of my soul! I speak not to dissuade you from marriage, but it must be to a man worthy of so estimable a heart, one equally loving and beloved; then will Monteith claim him as a brother, and, in the happiness of Ambrosine, endeavour to forget his own misfortunes."

"Monteith," said she, "I will never marry."

"Oh, yes!" replied he; "Ambrosine is formed to make the best and first of

of men happy, to live in honour, and to die surrounded by her children, at once the stay and pride of her age."

Ambrosine was moved at St. Clair's energy. "Is this happiness to be found at court?" said she, in a tremulous tone.

"It is to be found wherever you reside," replied Monteith, "be it in a court, or in a cottage."

"In a court I will never seek it.—But, deceiver that you are," added she, "you were not content in the payment of the exact sum—the contested chain I found concealed in the bag; and to shew you that I know how to receive a favour, I accept it—it shall be a pledge between us; and as there is no man's assistance in case of necessity, that I would so soon claim as yours, when I return it, it shall be either to demand your presence or counsel. Here, I am convinced, there is no danger; what

there

there may be on our return to the south, I know not, though I do not fear."

"A thousand blessings for this assurance," replied he, kissing her hand. "Oh, Ambrosine! I will now hasten back to Barra, and once more remember I am a banished man."

"The decrees of James are not those of fate," replied she.

"True; but I have a deeper sorrow—an outcast to my family and name—that disgrace can never be overcome."

"Where lies the disgrace, but in your own idea?" replied she; "such weakness is beneath Monteith. I pray you, rise superior to it, and thank Heaven for having given you a nobler name than your father's, and a better heart than your mother's. But we have beguiled the time in conversation; the taper burns in the socket, and the streaks of day enlighten the horizon; prudence

requires

requires you should be gone; but ere we part, give me one promise. In case of danger, I have pledged my word to claim your assistance; give me your honour, that should you need it, you will claim mine; my revenues are now large, and, I pray you, command them. Hazard no more such encounters as that with Carnegie; nay, in this you must oblige me, or our contract is void."

Monteith, thus entreated, made the promise required, and pressing Ambrosine's hand, first to his lips, and then to his heart, he tore himself from her, and left the gallery.

He immediately joined M'Gregor and De Bourg, and hastening to the frith, they crossed to the isle of Sky, from whence they sailed to Barra.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.



CHARMED with the music of the minstrels, the dowager called for them at the hour of dinner, when one of the domestics, being sent to seek them, brought word they were no where to be found. This omission of their duty made but little impression; but when night came, and also the ensuing day, without bringing them, the dowager ordered a diligent search to be made, lest they should have conveyed ought of value from the castle. Nothing being missing, the surprise in a few days subsided, though it was a cause of wonder that they departed without the pay they had so justly earned.

Some

Some few days after, arrived the noble cavalcade, which consisted of the families of Roskelyn and Stuart. The young hostess received the guests with a grace and politeness peculiar to herself, though the combined efforts of both families, added to all the entreaties and address of sir James himself, could effect nothing in his favour; and, after a stay of a month, the party returned to Roskelyn, accompanied by the dowager and the heiress.

As Ambrosine conjectured, the persecution respecting the knight of Lorn was there renewed with greater importunity. The queen also sent for her to Stirling, and pressed her to determine in his favour, or to declare whether her heart felt a predilection for any other, adding, that her best friend, the dowager of Roskelyn, was as anxious for the marriage as herself; and also assured her, that had the lady Kintail been

living, she would have warmly adopted it.

"'Tis most probable my mother might have done so," replied the heiress, "for the lady Roskelyn had great power over her, and she herself was more attached to the splendour of public life than I am: but had she even adopted the same measures, I should still have exercised a free will, in a business of so much importance as my own future happiness. My father, I am convinced, had he lived, would have left me at liberty; he knew my heart, and that the honour of my family and name was as dear to me as to himself. The dowager of Roskelyn hath indeed power over me for near two years; but if that is exerted too far, she may reduce me to the necessity of adopting some hasty measure, or to take refuge in a convent from her tyranny; in either of which cases she will be more to blame

than

than I. No decided step will I take during my minority, unless compelled, and then self-defence is the first and strongest law of nature."

"You refuse decidedly then?" replied the queen; "but you have not answered to the question of your heart being engaged."

"Because, pardon me, I revere your grace as queen of Scotland, and not as my confessor."

"You are too shrewd and assuming for a young maid; and I have condescended too far, and will trouble myself no more in the business."

"I thank your grace, and shall be happy to spare you the trouble." So saying, Ambrosine made her obeisance, and left the apartment.



In the mean time the outlaws had safely reached Barra, where the confine-

ment was now doubly irksome to St. Clair. Ambrosine, in spite of all his efforts, became his daily and nightly thoughts: that he had forfeited his liberty, and lost his fortune for an ungrateful woman, stung him with double violence, when he reflected that it had also debarred him from offering his heart to a maid whose mind, as well as person, could have made him completely happy. The frivolities and vanity of the one, and the dignified and unassuming manners of the other, were strongly contrasted in his thoughts; and the remembrance of his first love, which used ever to be recalled to his memory with anger and bitterness, now lost its acrimony, and sunk into that calm contempt, that scarcely ever intruded on his fancy, unless to raise the virtues of Ambrosine by the comparison. Much as he loved her, her honour was yet dearer to him than the possession of her person;

person; and he resolved, at all events, never to forget himself so far as to make her the wife of an outlaw.

De Bourg and the rest of the party laughed at his scruples; they all truly wished the happiness of St. Clair, but thwarting the favourite views of the house of Roskelyn gave them yet superior delight. The heir already in their possession, and Monteith once married to the heiress of Kintail, their power, not only in the islands, but also in Ross-shire, where her possessions lay, would be unbounded. While *they* revolved in their minds the utility of the plan, and the weight and consequence it would give Monteith, *he* considered only her welfare and honour. Happy he thought he could make her, as he would willingly have devoted his life to that purpose; but his heart sunk at the unmerited disgrace she must share, and the warm imagery of love, with all its

glowing fascination, vanished, leaving only a gloomy retrospection of the past. Sometimes he resolved to leave his country, and in the service of some foreign prince to gain fame and fortune; but to leave Ambrosine a defenceless prey to persecution, and himself to espouse quarrels in which his heart had no share, and to fight for an hireling's price, never failed to crush the idea as it rose, and for the present, at least, made him resolve to remain at Barra.

In this state three months passed, when one morning a stranger was announced at the fortress; inquiring for Monteith, he was immediately admitted. "I bring a trinket and a letter," said he, "which I was commanded to deliver into the hands of the chief. I have used much dispatch in travelling from Roskelyn, for I was nobly paid, and will only wait for an answer to return."

St.

St. Clair scarcely heard what he said, before tearing open the letter, he read as follows:—

"I am beset with fools, and surrounded with knaves, and am resolved to bear it no longer. Use all prudence, for I would not avoid a small evil at the expence of a greater. I put no superscription nor name, in case of loss or other failure, but you will know the writer by the token. Adieu."

At the conclusion, Monteith paused until the messenger recalled him to recollection, by asking him for a reply.

"Return my good friend, with all speed," replied Monteith; "but I have a messenger that will be more swift than you: however, should you reach Ros-

kelyn before him, the answer is—*All is well, and fear not.*"

The outlaws then gave him refreshment, and St. Clair making him an ample present, he hastened away.

Willing as they all were to volunteer in this cause, it was thought necessary for two of the principals to remain at Barra, and drawing lots for that purpose, the chance fell upon M'Gregor and Hamilton. Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, with the companions who had attended them to the tournament, then immediately engaged a vessel, and the wind serving, safely reached the port of Ardnamurchan, where they landed, and purchasing horses, continued their way with unremitting speed, until they arrived at a small hamlet within six miles of Roskelyn. There they left their horses; and according to a hasty plan they had formed at Barra, Monteith,

Ross,

Ross, and De Bourg, clad themselves in palmer's weeds, and so otherwise disguised their persons, that it was next to impossible their nearest friends should know them, unless previously apprised of the deception. At a little distance they were followed by their companions, who, vested in the habiliments of herdsmen, called themselves brothers returning from the Highlands, where they had been to take possession of a small patrimony.

On reaching the vicinity of Roskelyn, the friends of the outlaws took up their residence in a cottage, in order, as they said, to recover from their fatigue, while the pretended pilgrims proceeded to the castle, entreating admittance and refreshment, for the love of the blessed St. Cuthbert, to whose shrine they were travelling, in order to expiate the sins of their youth.

Though the inhabitants of the castle

were not famed for hospitality, this appeal was too strong to be refused, and to the dust of St. Cuthbert was granted what would have been denied to the wants of mortal men; the vassals immediately admitting the supposed pilgrims into an outward hall among the domestics, where they were furnished with such food as cold charity allows.

Thankful of having any how gained an entrance, they soon, by careless questions, and attention to the discourse of the vassals, learned that sir James Stuart was then at the castle, the lord and lady Roskelyn with the court at Stirling, and that the dowager and her young charge were, on their return, to depart to Berwick.

"Well to be sure," said one of the lackeys, "it is a strange business, but, according to the old saying, one man's meat is another's poison, for a more gallant, or a handsomer knight, than sir

James

James Stuart, doth not tread Scottish ground."

"However true that may be," replied a female servant, that sat spinning, "she is his equal every way, for a fairer maid neither England nor Scotland can produce; and if she don't like him, that alters the case. I see no reason why she should be sent to a nunnery; marry, because the dowager says she has some lover in secret. She had better go to a nunnery herself, for there be liars abroad, if she hath not more occasion to mourn the sins of her youth than the lady Ambrosine."

"Oh! but a convent will soon bring her to reason," answered he; "she hath naturally a merry heart, and the moping of the nuns wont suit her, so that she will be glad to change them for sir James. I'm sure you would yourself, Bridget."

"That's more than you know, fool;

but, if I was in her place, I would do neither. The lady Ambrosine hath money enough to choose a husband for herself; and if I was she, I would try whether my legs would not run as fast as the dowager's head could contrive, before I would be a slave to her vagaries. One night, when I attended her to bed, I told her as much; but, poor soul! she only sighed, and said—"Alas! I have no one to receive me, Bridget."

At that moment, being the hour of supper, the lackeys went to their respective duties, and the maid was left alone with the pilgrims.

"Holy St. Cuthbert!" said De Bourg, in a sanctified drawling tone, "have ye forgotten, brethren, the dream I related to ye the night I fell asleep at the foot of St. Bridget's shrine?"

Monteith made no reply, but Ross, supposing he had some motive in the question, answered—"No, truly, brother;

ther; it was a wonderful inspiration, and you should be careful to obey its dictates."

"I mean it—pardon me, fair maid, the question, but either my ears deceived me, or some one called you Bridget?"

"My name is Bridget, pilgrim; but why ask you?"

"From no vain motive: St. Bridget hath been my patroness from my youth; at her feet have I wearied her with my petitions, and at her altar have I offered up my wealth, until at length she yielded to my prayers; then by her side have I slept, 'till, sinner that I am, my wanderings carried me from her, and she sought another votary. Passing lately through Ross-shire, while my brethren prostrated themselves before St. Duthac, I sought out my saint, and, overcome with involuntary sleep, sunk at the foot of her altar, when methought she stood before me, and striking me with a

branch

branch she held in her hand, called thrice in a severe and solemn tone o voice—'Solomon, Solomon, Solomon! recreant that thou art! after so long an absence, why visitest thou me?' Trembling at her frown, methought I entreated her pardon, when, assuming a milder air, she said—'Once more then I try thee—observe my words; and when thou meetest a maiden who shall bear my name, give her, in token from me, the ruby ring thou wearest upon thy finger, and tell her that my commands are, that she disclose the present to no one but to a true virgin, under twenty years of age, of high blood, and the only child of her father, which virgin shall further instruct her in my wishes."

"Holy saints!" exclaimed the maid, "my name is Bridget, sure enough; but why her saintship should be so kind to me, I cannot tell."

"'Tis not for you to judge," replied

De

De Bourg. "If you can truly assure me your name is Bridget, and that you will strictly obey her commands, I will execute my commission."

"Gracious goodness! ye may search the book; I was baptized at the church of the Holyrood, in the city of Edinburgh."

"No, I will take your word; I cannot suppose you would seek to deceive me. Brother," addressing Monteith, "give me the ring. Fearful, after so solemn an injunction, of losing the identified jewel, I gave it into the trust of my brother, who is more careful than myself."

Monteith immediately gave him a ring which he had received among the jewels from Ambrose.

"Take it, maiden," said De Bourg; "but observe the conditions—disclose the mission to no one but a true maiden, under twenty, of high blood, and the only

only child of her father, and, according to the holy Bridget, you shall then hear further.—Know you any such?"

"Marry, I must consider; there's my dear friend Barbara Macgowrie—she is under twenty; and her own father's mother was second cousin by father's side to M'Lean, who served in king Robert's wars."

"I think not she is a true maid," said De Bourg. "Is she the only child of her father?"

"Holy goodness, no! there be nine of them; but as for the scandal of John Anderson, I am sure it is false, for she has told me so a thousand times."

"Her word is not to be taken: you must heed how you transgress the commands of holy Bridget; for, if you do, you will hear no more, and also incur her severe displeasure."

"The goodness forbid! I fear I shall be obliged to keep the secret, for I know

know no one who exactly answers the description."

"You must then have patience; the saint who sent the ring can also send a maid proper to reveal it to.—Hath the lady Roskelyn a daughter?"

"No, she hath only a son; she is not herself more than four and twenty, and the dowager hath no child but the lord of Roskelyn.—Oh, the goodness!" exclaimed she, after a pause, "what a fool am I! if there is not the lady Ambrosine, who, I will be bound to swear, is a true virgin, and the only child of her father, the lord of Kintail."

"'Tis doubtless the very maid St. Bridget intended," replied De Bourg, in his sanctified tone. "If she be what you say, disclose it to her, but with prudence and secrecy."

A few moments after, Bridget was called to her household duties, when De

De Bourg, repeating his command, and she her promise of observance, left them.

"A thousand thanks to thy inventive genius, dear Solomon!" said Monteith; "but for this lie, though we are in the house, we should have found innumerable difficulties in letting her know it."

"A lie, quotha!" replied De Bourg; "the foundation of the story is true—I only heightened the colouring, and added a few incidents."

"What then," said Ross, laughing, "in truth the holy Bridget visited thy dreams?"

"In faith hath she," replied he; "for when I was a lad in France, the name of my first love was Bridget; at her feet I sighed and sued, and racked my brains and emptied my purse to obtain her favour; but, alas! once gained, the inconstancy of man assailed me, and travelling to Normandy, for a whole year

I neglected

I neglected my love; so that when I returned, I found she had chosen a better votary, for the duke of Burgundy had taken my place—so far historical, the rest apocryphal; and marry, St. Bridget will serve you a good turn I hope; in which case you will owe her a wax-taper of a pound weight at least."

"And truly will I pay her, so thou wilt place it before her shrine," replied Monteith. "But to a more material subject; what think you of the conduct of the dowager to Ambrosine?"

"'Tis worthy of the rest of her deeds," answered Ross: "incapable of bending the will of the heiress to her wishes, she would, if possible, embitter two of the best years of her life; but thou hast not the heart of a man if thou dost not prevent it."

"Ross, I dare not be a villain: Heaven witness for me, that, had I worlds, I would share them with so noble-mind-

ed

ed a maid; but to reward her generous friendship with disgrace, I cannot bear."

"Hist!" interrupted De Bourg, "some one comes; screw up the muscles of your face to the extreme point of hypocrisy, and tune your voices to the same note."

The intruder was one of the vassals, who came to shew the pilgrims to a chamber, allotted for such guests in the left tower of the castle, and where, furnishing them with clean straw and coverlids, he left them.

CHAPTER XIII.



INTERESTED as the pilgrims were to procure an interview with Ambrosine, the impatience of Bridget equalled theirs, and hastening to the apartment of the heiress, she found her seated in deep reflection. "Sweet lady," said she, "you were ever kind and good, and I have news to tell you."

"To tell me, Bridget! prithee then relate it."

"There be three pilgrims come to the castle to-night; they travel to Durham, to the shrine of St. Cuthbert."

"Heaven speed them! I hope the saint will protect them on their journey, and

and reward their piety.—Is this all thy news?"

"No, lady; the blessed St. Bridget herself has sent me a message."

"A message to thee! I pray thee to what purport?"

"Yes, lady, even to such a poor lowly damsel as myself; and I was to declare it to no one but a true maid, under twenty, and who was the only child of her parents; and now, lady, as I am sure that must be you, I will reveal it."

"What knave hath persuaded thee to believe such folly?"

"No folly, lady; and for knaves, if the pilgrims be knaves, they be most portly ones; their faces indeed are hardly to be seen for their hair, and the great hats they wear slouched over their foreheads, but they look like lords at least; and for one of them who is quite silent, if noble looks would make a king, he would

would be king of the whole world. As I stooped to pick up my thread, I caught a better view of his face—such fine black eyes, lady, and such a fine-shaped nose, I never saw before."

"They have beguiled thee with their hypocrisy—give me my night-rail—I will away to bed—vexation hath made me heavy."

"Dear lady, ere you go, hear what I have to say, as you alone can inform me what St. Bridget's commands are for me.—Sinner that I am, should I disregard her token, I dare not go to bed."

"Her token!" repeated Ambrosine; "prithee, Bridget, what token hath she sent thee? a pair of striped garters, a sweet-cake in the shape of a heart, or the parings of her nails in a silk bag to wear about thy neck, in order to drive away evil spirits; if the last, I pray thee

haste

haste to put it on, that thou may'st not be so easily duped."

"You have a merry heart, lady, whatever betides you; but, pardon me, 'tis sinful to jest on such subjects. The blessed Bridget commanded one of the pilgrims in a dream to give me neither more or less than this beautiful ring."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Ambrosine, snatching the ring, "is it possible? Is William returned from the commission I sent him upon?"

"No, lady; had he, right well do I know that he would have been here, not only for your sake, but for mine."

"True," answered Ambrosine, pausing; "it is impossible he should. But these pilgrims, thou sayest, are men of noble port, one particularly."

"Yes, lady; the silent one is so tall and stately, that when he stood by the vassals of the house, he seemed to look

down

down upon them; and surely, if strangers had come in, they would have drawn back, and have supposed him the lord of the castle at least; in good truth, I felt ashamed to see them seated in the outward hall."

"Bridget, I must see these pilgrims."

"You, lady! will you then tell me further of the will of the saint?

"Undoubtedly, if she communicates it to me. Where are the dowager and the knight of Lorn?"

"In the great hall, at supper."

"Where are the pilgrims?"

"In the traveller's chamber in the left tower: shall I order them to attend you, lady?"

"Not for your life, dear Bridget; this business must be private; the family retired to rest, we will adventure to the tower, and hear further both of thy fate and mine."

"Think you then, lady, that these men be diviners?"

"No; yet, if I mistake not, the future happiness or misery of my life depends upon one of them, and 'tis necessary I consult him thereon, yet see thou keep it secret."

"I will; but I pray you, do not forget, lady, to ask him further respecting the commands of St. Bridget to me."

"Undoubtedly not, though I can already in part inform thee. If thou keepest this secret with truth and honour, it is the will of the holy Bridget that thou wed William, and that I give thee a marriage portion."

"Holy Virgin," exclaimed she, "reward the blessed saint for her kindness to me, and you also! but did you dream it, lady?"

"It matters not now for you to know how I gained the information I possess,

possess, so thou gettest a good husband, and a marriage portion; but, should a word escape thee, 'tis all void."

"Never fear me; I would sooner be dumb a month than hazard such a loss."

"'Tis well; here, take thy ring, but for the present shew it to no one; and for the white robe I wore yesterday, take that—thou mayest convert it into a wedding-garment; nay, no thanks—defer them, I pray thee; hie thee into the castle, and carefully observe when all are gone to rest; and bring me intelligence, and also a fresh taper to light us to the strangers."

"Shall you not fear to venture to the tower to-night, lady?"

"Surely not; if thou fearest, remain behind."

"Marry, Heaven forbid! I would follow you to the world's end; St. Bridget, I have no doubt, will guide us through every danger."

"Haste thee away then, but be cautious: I will extinguish my taper, as if I were retiring to rest, and will wait thy return in darkness."

Bridget did as she was commanded; a husband, and a marriage portion, were objects too material to be lost for so trivial a duty; and, though she longed to relate the high favour she was in with the saint, yet she resolved to restrain herself until either the pilgrims or Ambrosine set her tongue at liberty on the subject.

Ambrosine, left alone, could scarcely believe it possible that the outlaws should have reached Roskelyn in so short a space of time. The conduct of Monteith at Kintail, and the almost incredible speed he had used, flattered her that she was not indifferent to him; but the distracted passion he was said to have entertained

tertained for the lady Roskelyn four years before, sickened her at heart; yet, reflecting on the subject, she said mentally—"Away with such thoughts—I blush to let them find harbour a moment in my bosom; the mind of Monteith is superior to such folly—he cannot love without esteem; and let me but once claim an interest in his heart, if I hold it not, the fault be mine. Vanity might prompt him at the tournament to hold me unrivalled, and gratitude might bring him to Kintail; but his emotion, when we conversed in the gallery there, was surely neither occasioned by vanity nor gratitude. Of women well may he think cheaply—they have been the bane of his life. Oh! should it be the fortune of mine to retrieve the character of my sex in the mind of so noble a man, how gladly should I relinquish all the false glare of the court for the dreary rocks among which he dwells!"

Such were the reflections of Ambrosine till Bridget joined her, when she informed her all was quiet in the castle, and the lights extinguished; after a short consultation, they took the way to the tower where the pilgrims where lodged. As they passed along, an idea of fear struck Ambrosine, that the pilgrims might not be the persons she hoped; yet the identity of the ring in a great measure dispelled it. As they passed through the lower galleries of the castle, and crossed the courts, the owls and bats, disturbed by the glare of the taper from their ivy haunts on the turrets, hooted and skimmed around them, to the great annoyance of Bridget, who, considering them as the harbingers of goblins or devils, did not cease a moment recommending herself in silent prayer to her patron saint; while Ambrosine, superior to a dread of objects whom she never knew or injured, passed fearlessly and

lightly

lightly forward, waving the taper to defend herself from the too near approach of such disagreeable intruders.

On reaching the tower, Ambrosine left Bridget below, and with less firmness ascended the stairs, and having gained the apartment, hesitated several times whether she should knock. At length, with forced courage, she struck gently at the door, and was instantly answered by Monteith, who demanded who was there? Certified by the voice of St. Clair, she replied—"Ambrosine of Kintail, who wishes to hold a short conference with the pilgrims, whom she will wait for in the lower apartment."

Before Ambrosine could descend, the door was unbarred, and she saw the outlaws all completely clothed, though without their cloaks; and, seated on benches in the apartment, had their swords unsheathed before them, and daggers in their girdles.

She shuddered at the sight, but St. Clair advancing reassured her—"First of women!" said he, "why have you ventured here at this hour? to-morrow might have been more convenient, than crossing the castle in the dead of night, as you must have done. We have devised the means of staying another day; De Bourg will feign sickness, and the rights of hospitality cannot be denied us."

Ambrosine held out her hand. "I grieve," said she, "to give you this trouble, and tremble lest I should involve you in danger; but young and defenceless, I have no one to take my part, and have only a respite of a few days allowed me, to determine whether I will wed the knight of Lorn, or pass the remaining two years of my minority in the convent of Franciscan nuns at Berwick. The knight I think not of, nor have I any decided aversion to a convent, except to that of the Minoresses, whose

whose abbess I well know to be a creature of the dowager's, and I have no dôubt would make my situation very disagreeable there. What I would entreat is, that you would assist me in getting hence. On the north side of the Tay, at the foot of the Grampian Hills, there is a monastery of black monks, and also a convent of nuns, who would doubtless receive me for a good consideration, until I could claim my own."

Monteith pressed her hand to his heart in silence, while De Bourg and Ross swore to die in her defence.

"Heaven forbid," said she, "I should need so dangerous a proof of yôur friendship! prepare but fleet horses—I can ride with the best of ye, and we will soon be safe from pursuit."

"We are," replied Monteith, "already provided; they are not more than six miles from hence, and can easily be brought hither; one for you is alone

wanting, and that we will immediately procure."

"Need you money?" said she.

"No," interrupted De Bourg; "I am cash-bearer, and the trash is plenty."

"'Tis well," replied she; "I must hasten, for time wastes. To-morrow, at the hour of midnight, cross the court that leads to this tower, and under the portal on the right hand, is a small door which opens to the chapel; you may easily unbar it, and in the aisle wait my coming. The lamp that constantly burns before the altar will give you sufficient light, and I shall bring a taper, as I cannot pass the avenues of the castle in darkness."

"Suffer me to accompany you through them," said St. Clair.

"For your life, enter not the interior of the dwelling," replied Ambrosine; "fear not for me—I am safe. There is a passage through the sacristy which

leads

leads to the outside of the rampart wall, by which I mean to escape; and in the wood adjoining you may conceal your horses. But adieu—I must away, as I much question whether St. Bridget herself hath been able to preserve her poor votary from the horrors of fear during the short interval which she hath waited at the entrance of the tower."

So saying, she held her hand to each, but last to Monteith, who, clasping it, and taking his sword, declared he would see her across the court. Ambrosine would have denied, but St. Clair insisting, she gave him the taper, when, placing her arm under his, he descended the stairs, where they found the trembling Bridget awaiting the return of her mistress.

"Bridget," said Ambrosine, "all is well; remember the promise of secrecy; not only thy fate, but mine, depends upon it."

Bridget made no reply, but by a bend of the kness, so great was her astonishment to see her mistress accompanied by the handsome pilgrim, who now appeared a thousand times more so, when his head was uncovered, and his form undisguised by the palmer's cloak.

Passing through the courts, the owls and bats again annoyed them; Monteith used the same means to keep them off as Ambrosine had before done, and considered her with admiration, devoid of that puerile weakness, which, in spite of his former love for Ellen, he could not even then avoid thinking, partook of folly and affectation.

On reaching the lower gallery, Ambrosine stopped, and would have bidden him farewell, but, holding her hand, he entreated her stay a few moments. Placing the taper in a recess, and Bridget retiring a few paces, he said—" Flattered by the reflection that you consider me as

as a friend, pardon the question; but is there no plan that could be formed better than your wasting two of the best years of your life in a convent, and from whence you are not certain but the partiality of the queen for the dowager of Roskelyn, and the knight of Lorn, might force you?"

"I see all my danger, but know no alternative," replied she; "know you of any?"

"Alas, no!" answered he, with a heavy sigh. "Oh Ambrosine, could I recal the past! but the wish is vain—sorrow is mine for ever."

"Say not so; when we met last, you questioned me closely; shall I use the same freedom with you?"

"Assuredly; I will shew you my heart as openly as 'tis before the Creator who made it."

"You asked me if I loved the knight of Lorn; I replied, truly, that I did not; now

now answer to me—love you still the lady Roskelyn?"

"No, on my soul and honour! Three years has she been to me as nothing; in the first paroxysm of my disappointment I hated her—in the second I thought of her with contempt, but now without either. If I remember her at all, it is with satisfaction that she has spared me the greatest of all my misfortunes, that of being her husband."

"I am a strange bold girl, but pardon me—love you any one else?"

"Ambrosine, I am a banished man, and *dare* not love."

"Ridiculous refinement! To punish your enemies in the most effectual manner, would be to let them see you happy in spite of their machinations; but we must part—the day will soon dawn. Fail not to be with your companions, in the chapel at midnight, and leave the rest to fortune; but ere we part, say—

know

know you the way back to your friends?

"I do—I observed it well; I was also here once in my boyish days with my uncle Monteith."

"Farewell, then," said she; "remember to-morrow night, and Heaven guide you!

"Angels, with hearts pure as your own, watch round you!" answered he, pressing her hand to his lips, and preparing to leave her.

"Will you not the taper!" said she, detaining him.

"No. Oh Ambrosine," replied he, with an emotion he could not repress, again seizing and kissing her hand; "would I had known thee sooner, or never ——"

"Finish not the sentence," said she, jestingly; "know you not the proverb, '*better late than never*.' But, once more, farewell."

Monteith

Monteith made no reply, but, leaving the court, gained the tower, where his companions awaited him.

Ambrosine, in the mean time, with Bridget, crossed through the interior of the castle in silence. They were, however, somewhat alarmed, in passing the dowager's chamber, to hear her dog bark; but, using their utmost speed, they soon reached the apartment of Ambrosine, where she detained Bridget during the remainder of the night, or rather morning.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.



BRIDGET, on being requested, readily gave Ambrosine an oath of secrecy, who then informed her, that her lover William had been the messenger to fetch the pilgrims, though she evaded saying from whence they came. Ambrosine also repeated her promise of giving her a marriage-portion, and commanded her, if she was successful in leaving the castle on the ensuing night, to demand her dismission, and, first making William her spouse, to travel to Kintail, where, to insure her a proper reception, she gave her an order under her own hand, and money also to defray her journey thither; then, collecting her most valu-

able

able jewels, she laid herself down to rest, with Bridget by her side. The latter, though the flattering idea of being under the immediate protection of a saint was somewhat diminished, yet consoled herself so well with the patronage of the heiress, that she soon fell asleep. Not so Ambrosine; the bold step she had taken, under a firm reliance on Monteith's honour, and the almost certainty that he loved her, kept her awake, and she looked forward with the pleasurable hope of making him amends for all the evils of fortune, and of constituting the happiness of the only man that could make her so.

In the morning, De Bourg feigned sickness so artfully, that he was easily permitted to remain all day in the apartment allotted to the travellers; Ross, the better to support the deception, remained

ed with him; while Monteith joined his companions at the cottage, and gave them in charge to fetch the horses from where they had left them, and also to purchase one for Ambrosine.

Twice in the day, under pretence of carrying something to the sick pilgrim, they were visited by Bridget, who brought them intelligence that at noon the same day William had arrived safe.

De Bourg, perceiving that Bridget treated him with more distance than his companions, from the remembrance of the saint, said—"My dear maid, look not at me with that averted eye, lest ye make me guilty of forswearing St. Bridget for ever, in which case the sin will be yours, not mine. I vow to you, that, satisfied with the candour and beauty of your countenance, I should at once have disclosed the business to you, without any subterfuge; but the over-caution of my companions prevented it,

and

and reduced me to have recourse to a deception, for which even at the time my heart reproached me; condemn me not, therefore, for their fault."

Bridget accepted the apology.

"Nay then," added he, "give me your hand, and a kiss of reconciliation, I insist. Miserable man that I am! I have neither rings, chains, lockets, crosses, nor trinkets, fit to present to a maiden; but the will with a generous mind like thine, Bridget, will be taken for the deed; suffer me, therefore, I pray thee, to beg thee to accept this piece of gold for my sake."

"Indeed, generous sir, I cannot; the lady Ambrosine pays me nobly; if she will suffer me, I will live and die with her."

"Thou art a good girl," answered he: "but thou dost not pardon me unless thou takest my present; for, though it is not a trinket for thee to wear, thou

mayest

mayest hereafter drill a hole through it, and hang it round thy eldest son's neck; I promise thee it will be of wonderful efficacy in making him cut his teeth."

Monteith and Ross both laughed, nor could Bridget forbear.—From which of thy saints doth it possess that virtue?" said St. Clair.

"What is that to thee, infidel?" answered De Bourg. "I am punished for thy guilt."

"Nay, Bridget will accept thy present," said Monteith, "and also the same from me and Ross, so that the elder child may not have the advantage of the two that succeed."

"Ye are merry hearts, sirs," said Bridget; "my lady willed me to ask you if you remembered the way to the chapel."

"We do," replied Monteith; "bear

to

to her our best wishes—we will not fail her."

During the whole of the day, Ambrosine kept her apartment as much as possible, without appearing particular; for, conscious of her intention, she thought the knight of Lorn and the dowager viewed her with scrutinizing eyes; and towards evening complaining of indisposition she retired early.

It was an hour beyond midnight before all was quiet in the castle, when, taking her jewels, she resolved to adventure. Bridget, who had been weeping all the afternoon, would fain have accompanied her, but that she peremptorily refused; for, however she wished a female companion, she well knew it would impede their flight: repeating, therefore, the former command, for her to wed William as soon as possible, and to repair to Kintail, she took her taper, and

and, dismissing Bridget to rest, left the chamber. With a light but trembling step, she passed the gallery where her own chamber was situated, and, crossing the great stairs that led to the grand apartments, she entered the gallery appertaining to the dowager and her retinue.

She recollected the barking of the dog the preceding night with some alarm; but now all appeared quiet around her, until, leaving the suite of chambers to descend to the lower story, she thought she heard a step above, and the whispering of distant voices, which the echo of the high roof conveyed to her ear. Thoroughly alarmed, yet too far advanced to draw back, she extinguished her taper, and proceeded in silent haste through the lower galleries into the first court, where, by the imperfect light of the moon, she discovered a man leaning against one of the buttresses.

tresses. Her alarm was however of short duration, for, directed by her white garment, he advanced.—"Dearest Ambrosine," said Monteith, "I have suffered more than I can describe by your stay: a few minutes more, and I should have endeavoured to seek you in the castle."

"Peace, on your life," said she, in a low voice; "I fear I am pursued, and that the extinguishing my taper has alone prevented my being overtaken."

Monteith clasped her hand, and hastening forward, said—"They must be bold fellows who take you from me; methinks in this cause, I could encounter an army."

As they passed forward, he informed her that himself, Ross, and De Bourg, had been in the chapel ever since midnight; that, weary with waiting, they had sought out the passage through the sacristy,

sacristy, and unbarred the gate which opened beneath the ramparts, where their companions, fearful of danger from their protracted stay, had joined them, having first fastened their horses in the wood.—"And now," said he, "surely there is no cause to fear; we are six, and, well armed, are equal to treble our number."

As he spoke, they reached the door of the chapel, when Ambrosine, turning, saw a light crossing the outward gallery of the court, and the moment after heard several voices articulating her name. Trembling almost to fainting, she threw herself into Monteith's arms.—"Oh fly, St. Clair," said she, "I conjure thee! I have brought thee here to death (for thy enemies will prevail), wretch that I am, when I would have given my life to have saved thine!"

"Beloved of my soul!" said St. Clair, forgetting both prudence and caution, and clasping her to his heart, "fear not;

all will be well; your distress can alone unnerve my arm." As he spoke, he bore her into the chapel, where he informed his companions of the danger, and bade them stand prepared, as he feared their enemies were too near to be avoided.

The light which beamed through the door of the chapel, and which Monteith in his haste had left unclosed, directed their pursuers, who a moment after rushed in, to the number of ten, at the head of whom were the knight of Lorn and the lady Roskelyn.

Monteith instantly placed Ambrosine, who scarcely breathed, on the steps of the altar, and with his companions unsheathed his sword, advancing in a posture of defence. The vassals had been hastily called, and, most of them being unarmed, drew back at so formidable a sight; but sir James, who at his entrance had caught a glimpse of Ambrosine in the arms of Monteith, coming forward,

and singling him out, said—"If thou art worthy the love of the heiress of Kintail, thy single arm to mine."

"Willingly," said St. Clair; "'tis not the first time thou and I have met; thou owest a fall to the Danish knight—take death from the arm of Monteith."

"Monteith!" exclaimed sir James, starting, and drawing back some paces, leaning on his sword.

"It is Monteith," said the dowager, "the daring outlaw, who, regardless of his king, sets his commands at defiance, and tramples on the rights of the lord of Roskelyn; and now, to complete the measure of his guilt, not only commits theft in the person of the heiress, but also adds the crime of sacrilege."

"Talk you, unfeeling woman, of rights destroyed, when you look at me?" replied Monteith. "The knight speaks nobly; hand to hand, let us decide it; if I fall, so rest my soul, as I free him

from my death! and as my blood flows, lady, remember it hath no disgrace but what it inheriteth from you."

The dowager trembled, and leant on one of the attendants, while sir James drew yet farther back.

"Nay, sir knight, shun me not. See you that monument," continued he, pointing to one of the late lord Roskelyn; "under it lies the husband of that woman: may his spirit witness the combat, and if there be dishonour, that it sits not on the shield of Monteith! You tremble, vain woman, and turn pale; you—you talk of sacrilege! you, who have profaned every duty, sacred and human! Your first fault was venial, but your next was of the die of hell; and here I warn you to repentance—here, before the altar of your God, and of my God, and before the tomb of your husband and of my father!"

"Gallant Monteith," said the knight of Lorn, throwing down his sword, "if

it be possible, grant me thy pardon! The tale of St. Clair's wrongs, sorrows, and oppressions, I have heard indistinctly, but till this hour never knew their amount."

"Nor do you now, brave Stuart," replied Monteith, following his example, and throwing down his weapon; "command my life—at the call of friendship, it shall freely come forth: but for Ambrosine, she hath a dearer claim—she *shall* be free; for though a banished man must not love her, he can still protect her."

"Valiant chief, I yield: when I add to your misfortunes, may they revert on my own head." Then, turning to the dowager, he added—"Dismiss your vassals, lady; neither you nor I shall gain honour by this business: for you, St. Clair, you must yield to necessity; but should opportunity ever offer, remember you have a friend in James Stuart."

As he spoke he held out his hand, which Monteith receiving, said—"I thank ye, noble knight, and if you can accept that of an outlaw, command mine."

"And will you suffer him," said the dowager, addressing sir James, "to bear away Ambrosine? Is this the assistance I claimed from you?"

"Lady," replied he, "the story of St. Clair Monteith, though his person was unknown to me, has long been familiar to my ear, and made the impression which we feel from fabled sorrow and oppression. To-night I find the truth of what I before heard, certified by him, and undenied by you; and never shall my sword be raised against him. For your designs in my favour, much thanks; but I relinquish all claim to the lady Ambrosine, and entreat she may speak her own intentions and wishes, in which I swear to coincide."

Ambrosine,

Ambrosine, somewhat recovered by the amicable conversation that had passed, stood up, and said,—"Sir James, a better love than mine hangs over you; may you be blest to the extent of your wishes! For me, here at the holy altar, I declare, in the presence of the blessed saints, that I will no husband, unless it be Monteith, and, if he refuses me, to live and die a virgin. For the present, it is my intention to take refuge in a convent, for I like not the court, nor the guardianship of the dowager of Roskelyn. If I remain single two years, she may receive my revenues during that period; if I marry, I shall claim them, as by my father's testament the right is only mine from the day of marriage, payable to my own discharge and no other."

"Fortune attend you!" replied sir James. "Lady Roskelyn, I withdraw; I will no more to do in this business." So saying, he left the chapel.

"Poltroons!"

"Poltroons!" exclaimed the dowager, turning to the vassals, "why stand ye like statues? call your comrades; though a woman, I am not to be braved thus."

"The man that offers to stir dies," said Monteith. "Your rage and force are equally vain; Ambrosine shall be secured from your malice. Come, sweet maid," added he, placing her arm under his, and taking his sword in his right hand, "you shall be our pilot; fear not —they must fight well who rob us of so fair a prize." So saying, he took the way from the chapel through the sacristy, preceded by De Bourg with a taper, and followed by the rest of his companions.

They lost no time in gaining the wood and mounting their horses; Monteith wrapped his palmer's cloak round Ambrosine, at once to conceal her figure and to shield her from the cool morning air; at the same time, tying the hat over her face, he said—"In faith, Ambrosine,

brosine, thou bafflest my skill—I cannot make thee less lovely."

Conscious they should be pursued, and also aware that the greater part of the vassals of the house, buried in sleep, would take some time in preparation, they used their utmost speed, Ambrosine keeping pace with the foremost. As they conjectured their enemies would pursue northward, they took their way to the south, and by ten in the morning reached Selkirk, where procuring some refreshment for themselves and their beasts from a cottager, they continued to Drumlanrig where they reposed for a few hours, when they pursued their way to the coast, where they embarked in a vessel bound to Carrickfergus, at which place they considered they should be safe from pursuit.

In the mean time the dowager had dispatched messengers different ways, but

but particularly to the north, in order to gain intelligence of the heiress; but in vain: none could be obtained, and increased vexation was alone the result of the inquiry, not only to her, but to lord and lady Roskelyn, who hastened home on the first intelligence they received of what had happened.

Bridget was also questioned, but, true to her trust, she confessed only that she visited the pilgrims with Ambrosine, but denied that she considered them in no other light. This confession she was reduced to make by the dowager, who declared that the night preceding the flight of Ambrosine, a light shining through the lattice over the door of her chamber, and her dog barking, she had hastily risen, and to her great amazement seen the heiress and Bridget passing through the gallery with a taper.

The circumstance, however, made but a transient impresssion, as Ambrosine frequently

frequently sat till very late in the upper gallery that faced the sea, admiring the view by the light of the moon.

The restraint of Ambrosine, and her unusual thoughtfulness the ensuing day, were not lost on the dowager; it awakened her suspicion, and she communicated what she had seen the night before to sir James Stuart, and entreated him to watch with her the ensuing night. An hour after midnight, Ambrosine passed with her taper, and, to their farther astonishment, alone; on which the knight in silence pursued her; but, being deceived by her extinguishing the light, he was bewildered in the way, and obliged to return to the dowager's chamber. Alarmed at the knight's report of Ambrosine's caution, she immediately accompanied him in the pursuit, awakening the vassals who slept in that department of the castle. Calling loudly on Ambrosine, they hastened through the galleries; but her speed had

had exceeded theirs, and she had in all probability escaped undiscovered, had not the light from the chapel directed their steps: opposition was however fruitless, and the dowager only was punished with hearing harsh truths, which rankled and festered in her heart; while the knight of Lorn, at once convinced of the impossibility of gaining Ambrosine from so formidable a rival, nobly gave up his pretensions.

The disinterested conduct of sir James gave much displeasure to the family of Roskelyn; but, satisfied with the applause of his own heart, he left the castle, and in the pleasures and bustle of the court soon forgot his disappointment.

END OF VOL. I.

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